







*Kapoot*





CARVETH WELLS

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*Kapoot*

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THE NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY  
FROM LENINGRAD TO MOUNT ARARAT  
IN SEARCH OF NOAH'S ARK

*New York*

ROBERT M. McBRIDE & COMPANY

**KAPOOT**

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TO THE BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD,  
MY WIFE, ZETTA



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## PREFACE

**I**T IS nearly twenty-five years since I left college and started on a career of travel and adventure that led me into all kinds of strange places. My initiation as an explorer I received on the original survey of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway of Western Canada, and after two years I thought I knew what hardships and discomfort meant. My next taste of adventure lasted six years in the jungles of Malaya and ended by my becoming so thin that I had to wear a cushion in the seat of my trousers so that I could sit down without wounding myself! — and I left that country regarding myself as an authority on discomfort.

On arrival in the United States, having failed to secure a job as an engineer, I became a shipyard laborer. For months I existed in the muck and filth of the Northwest Steel Shipyard, bolting, reaming, riveting and “bucking up” for one of the fastest riveters in the yard. At night I would return home, covered with a mixture of oil and iron filings,



with my whole body vibrating like the pneumatic hammer whose blows I had been absorbing since daybreak. I'll never forget that hardship.

Fate then directed my footsteps to Arctic Lapland where I lived with the Lapps and accumulated lice for the first time in my life!

Once again I started out. This time to Central Africa, where I nearly perished in a snowstorm on the equator, while climbing the Mountains of the Moon, and I returned to America convinced that for sheer hardship and discomfort, nothing could beat the slopes of Ruwenzori. Then I went to Russia! I had read in a book that somewhere in Armenia there is a part of Noah's Ark and as I always like to have some definite object in my travels, I decided to try to find this ancient piece of wood. My search for this interesting relic led me from Leningrad to the slopes of Mount Ararat and the journey lasted one month, but it was a month of the most horrible hardship I ever have experienced in my life. I lost twenty-six pounds in weight, simply from slow starvation and loss of blood from innumerable bites of bedbugs and other vermin. The journey was an almost continual nightmare of horrible sights and disgusting experiences. Even the scenery in many places was tainted by an intermittent urinated breeze! I never dreamed that human beings could sink to the level to which Communism has brought

them in the Land of the Great Experiment. The tragedy of it all is that the present generation of young Communists are so ignorant of how the rest of the world lives that they do not know that their standard of living is lower than that of any other country.

Should the critics even deign to notice this book, I shall not be at all surprised if they haul me over the coals for describing in plain English, exactly what I saw in the land of the Soviets, but still I hope that among them there may be at least one who, having left the beaten track, saw Russia in the raw as we did.

One of my old lecture managers told me that he understood I was giving an obscene lecture on Russia! If this book is considered obscene, then Russia is obscene, because I propose to describe only things that you could see for yourselves if you went to Russia and left the beaten track of tourists and refused to be conducted and shown the Five-Year Plan.

To speak out and call a spade a spade is often an unpleasant undertaking, but in speaking of Soviet Russia, come what may, I intend to call a spade a shovel, and as Mehitabel said, "Wotthehell!"

CARVETH WELLS



*Kapoot*



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## *Chapter One*

### ENTICED BY INTOURIST

I HAVE tried to enter Russia on several occasions but for reasons best known to themselves the Russians refused to visa my passport. This could not have been because I was anti-Communist because until I myself went to Russia and saw what Communism had accomplished after fifteen years I was decidedly sympathetic with Russia. In fact I have been called a Bolshevik many times, simply because I dared to say that there was something wrong with Capitalism!

Having myself labored in a shipyard, I do know something of the conditions under which the laboring class are expected to work, and I know from bitter experience what happens to a manual laborer when he loses the use of his hands!

When they refused me a visa I concluded the reason was that I have never been inclined to take

myself or my adventures too seriously. I had the reputation of being a "debunker"! I had even dared to make light of the Dark Continent and fun of big game hunters! And I had committed the heinous sin of "doing" Rome in a day and generally poking fun at Mediterranean cruisers!

Russians, especially young Communists, are very serious people and almost devoid of a sense of humor, so perhaps they were afraid I might make light of their Five-Year Plan. In any case, until the advent of the Intourist Agency, I had given up hope of ever entering the land of the Soviets.

However, by a stroke of luck, I heard that the Swedish American Line was arranging a cruise that would include Leningrad and Moscow, and that members of the cruise would have no trouble about Russian visas.

It was an easy matter to get three tickets on that magnificent liner the *Kungsholm*, and thus insure my entry into Russia. The next thing was to interview the Intourist people in New York and see what arrangements could be made for leaving the *Kungsholm* in Russia and making an expedition to the Caucasus and Mount Ararat.

When I entered the Intourist office on Fifth Avenue, I was surprised to find that their publicity man was an American, and still more surprised when I discovered that he had read my books and

was quite enthusiastic when I told him I wanted to debunk Russia, that is to say, to expose the stories I had heard about the misery of the Russian people, the persecution of the Church, the absence of marriage, the danger to a woman traveling unaccompanied in Russia and that tourists were often arrested for taking snapshots! I told Intourist that I wanted to return to America and spread the good news that Russia was just as free and open to tourists as France or Switzerland.

None of the Russians I met at Intourist could speak or understand English, apparently; but since going to Russia I have changed my mind about this and am convinced that they could understand every word and probably speak English as well as I could, and that the necessity for using the American publicity manager as an interpreter was just a ruse to facilitate their inborn love of spying.

I finally left the offices of Intourist laden down with literature, maps and guidebooks; also with a letter of introduction written in Russian to their manager in Leningrad, but without any assurance that I would be permitted to leave the *Kungsholm* party in Moscow. That didn't bother me; I had already decided to remain in Moscow with or without permission and trust that the consequences would provide material for a lecture.

Eventually I boarded the *Kungsholm* with my



wife and camera man, ostensibly to make a cruise to Iceland, North Cape, Finland and Russia, but actually bound for Mount Ararat.

The moment we boarded the ship it was evident that Moscow was the main attraction of the cruise. Russian books were in evidence everywhere, especially Maurice Hindus's *Humanity Uprooted*, which I have since come to realize is almost as clever Communist propaganda as the articles of Walter Duranty.\*

Right here I want to state that I do not pretend to be an authority on Russia. If I were an authority, then you might just as well place this book with all the other books by "authorities" and forget about it, because if you are really anxious to know the truth about Russia, the last person to read is an "authority."

In the preface of *Humanity Uprooted* Maurice Hindus states, "I was born in a Russian village," and then he tells us that he left Russia at the age of fourteen and came to America. (He arrived in America in 1905.) Hindus did not return to Russia until 1923 when he went for the *Century Magazine*. Since then, according to his preface, "I have visited Russia almost annually"!

\*In traveling throughout America I have found that a great many people confuse Walter Duranty with Will Durant. Walter Duranty is the Moscow correspondent of the *New York Times* who has been the recipient of high Communist honors. The reader should read Will Durant's latest book, *The Tragedy of Russia*.

The very fact that Maurice Hindus is permitted to return to Russia annually is evidence that he is welcomed by the Russian Government, and the reason he is welcome is that he has never dared to tell the whole truth about Russia. If he had, he could never go back. But the books of Maurice Hindus are good propaganda, just as are the articles of Walter Duranty. If these two authorities are not Communists, then all I can say is that they have that reputation in Russia. Everywhere I went, from Leningrad to Turkey, I asked people about Duranty and Hindus, and their popularity was evident. Most of the real authorities on Russia are still in Russia and have been there for years, but they keep their mouths shut. If they did not, they would be kicked out.

But to get back to the *Kungsholm*! One of the first things I wanted was a translation of the letter Intourist had given me; but unfortunately the ship's interpreter couldn't speak Russian, so I asked the purser whether there were any Russians on board and he assured me that there was not. I then put the letter out of my mind and gave myself up to enjoying life on shipboard. However, I discovered an old acquaintance in the bartender. He had been engaged in secret service work in Stockholm, though outwardly he was one of the assistants in the Grand Hotel. As such he was in a position to make a

note of all foreign visitors and soon knew all the secret service agents of foreign countries who stopped at the hotel.

Bartenders are usually interesting men and the one on board the *Kungsholm* was exceptionally so. In the course of conversation with him, I mentioned the fact that I had a letter written in Russian but that there were no Russians on board.

"Don't worry," he said. "The moment we touch Norway the G. P. U. are sure to place a man on board, and by the time we reach Leningrad he'll know all there is to be known about every person on this boat."

Several weeks passed. Iceland and North Cape were past history and after many glorious days in the Norwegian fjords we touched at Bergen.

That night the bartender called me aside and said:

"I told you so! A Russian agent is aboard!"

I immediately asked the purser, but he assured me emphatically that such a thing was quite impossible as he not only had a complete list of the passengers but all their passports as well. I said nothing about the information I had received from the bartender, who assured me positively that a Russian agent whom he had known well by sight in Stockholm was not only on board the *Kungsholm* but that he had attended my lectures. Not

wishing to cause trouble between the purser and the bartender, I let the matter drop; but future events proved that Mr. Bartender was absolutely correct, and that from Bergen to Leningrad the passengers were under the observation of the G. P. U. Not even the captain had the slightest idea that he had on board an uninvited passenger. The "conducting" of the tour had already started!

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## Chapter Two

### KICKING GOD OUT OF RUSSIA

AS THE *Kungsholm* glided into the harbor at Leningrad, I noticed a Russian steamer that had apparently been endeavoring to berth but was having considerable difficulty in getting the gangplank to connect with the right spot on the wharf. Seeing us waiting for her to get settled her captain decided to tie up alongside anyway. Having done this, the men on shore seized large saws and sawed a huge chunk out of the wharf to fit the boat. This was my first introduction to Russian methods! As soon as our ship tied up, she was immediately boarded by numbers of smartly dressed officials, all of whom had revolvers prominently displayed. Soldiers with fixed bayonets took up positions at the top and the bottom of the gangplank, and the work of examining our passports began.

I have often heard complaints at the lengthy ex-

amination of passengers upon entry into the United States but it was nothing to the cross-examination to which we were subjected by these burly Bolsheviks.

In the meantime the Government money changers were doing a brisk business exchanging dollars for roubles at fifty cents a piece. I'm convinced that had the Swedish American Line known the true relative value of roubles and dollars, they would have warned us about these uniformed swindlers. It is true that we had been advised to change as little American money as possible into roubles, but we had not been told that Russian roubles were not much more valuable than toilet paper.

Personally I changed only a twenty-dollar bill for which I received about forty roubles. This number of roubles, together with the amount of American money in my possession and the numbers of all my travelers' checks, was endorsed on my passport. In addition, they noted on the passport my cameras, a portable typewriter and numerous other items, warning me that everything I took into Russia must be taken out except of course my good American dollars. I was clearly informed, however, that to take roubles out of Russia was a serious criminal offense, almost as bad as importing them.

When I asked for my passport to be returned

to me, I was told that it would be returned to me when I required it, but when and how I was to get it back was not explained. This was the first time in all my travels that I had been deprived of my passport, and I must admit that it gave me a sinking sensation.

However, everyone was delighted to see drawn up on the dock a fleet of about forty brand-new Lincoln cars with smart-looking chauffeurs. There was even some red cloth on the wharf for our bourgeois feet and our entry into Leningrad was very much like taking the Twentieth Century at Grand Central Terminal, New York. There was the usual argument between the old-timer cruisers and the passengers of less experience and smaller pocket-books, as to who should have the corner seats in the cars, so while these differences were being adjusted by the ever-courteous cruise officials, I wandered off toward a group of people who were evidently Americans but were not members of our cruise.

They turned out to be a party of students who were being shown Russia by some college professors who had evidently been in the land of the Soviets before. Quite a number of our American teachers seem to make a regular practice of organizing such groups of young intellectuals, at so much a head, for the purpose of showing them the inner

workings of the Great Experiment and making a profit at the same time.

Surrounded by eager listeners, they pointed out the principal landmarks, drawing attention especially to the enormous piles of wood-pulp and the mountains of short logs that were being loaded feverishly into the waiting steamers. As far as the eye could see were wharves and alongside were steamers by the dozen, with smoke pouring from their funnels. They seemed like a pack of bloodhounds straining at their leashes, waiting for the word "go." I listened to the conversation of my fellow Americans and noticed particularly that they said nothing about the fact that these vessels were being loaded with wood and pulp that had been produced by forced labor. Nothing was said of the thousands of wretched Russians who die like flies in the lumber camps of the North, compelled at the point of the bayonet to work day and night until they drop dead in their tracks, in order to fill these vessels with cargoes destined to ruin the wood-pulp industry of America and Canada.\* I have heard it said that the end justifies the means, but few people have the slightest idea of the means adopted in many of Russia's concentration camps to secure raw materials for export.

\* For the facts on forced labor the reader is referred to Chapter 3 of *The Terror in Europe* by Tiltman, published by JARROLD, LONDON.



Soon we were whizzing along at breakneck speed towards the Cathedral, which was the first item on our program of sightseeing. They do not call it a cathedral; it is "The Anti-religious Museum."

Like many other famous cathedrals, this one in Leningrad has a fine dome and from the outside looked like any other cathedral, but once inside, the difference was astonishing. The walls were plastered with ugly red banners and obscene drawings, which we had no time to stop and examine because we were immediately conducted to a great open space beneath the dome.

Most people who stand underneath domes of cathedrals look up—but in Russia the people look down. Standing in a ring under the dome were about two hundred Russians, all of them looking at the floor. In the center of the ring was an attendant who was delivering a lecture in Russian. He held in his hand a large lead weight which was attached by means of a cord to the roof of the dome about two hundred feet above his head.

On the floor exactly beneath the center of the dome was a red spot and radiating from it like the spokes of a huge wheel were lines painted on the floor. As far as I can remember the lines were colored alternately red and white. I joined the crowd around the speaker. A knowledge of Russian was quite unnecessary because he was obviously

demonstrating an experiment in physics which I had seen in my college days, showing that a pendulum swings in its own plane and will continue to swing in the same plane if left to itself.

Having explained this to his audience, the speaker walked to the circumference of the large circle, and placing the lead weight at the end of a red line, he let it go. Slowly the great pendulum swung across the floor of the cathedral; so slowly, on account of its great length, that the weight seemed to creep across the floor. When it reached the end of its swing, however, instead of swinging back along the same red line, the weight returned along an adjacent white line and then swung back on the next red line. By watching this pendulum swinging for five minutes, you could see for yourself that the building itself was slowly turning around. In other words, you could see that the world was rotating upon its axis—and this was the object of the demonstration.

Well! I knew perfectly well that the world *does* rotate upon its axis, but the Russians obviously didn't, and their amazement and delight was childish. Groups of people discussed the fact excitedly. Finally, when everyone was convinced that the world does rotate upon its axis, we were conducted around the cathedral to see the side shows!

These consisted in groups of wax figures, all life-

size, some male and others female but all suffering some kind of torture. One man was being burnt at the stake and by means of colored silks and an electric fan artificial but lifelike flames enveloped him. Another person was impaled upon a spike; another was on the rack; another was being flayed alive, and still another was being boiled alive; in fact, the series of "habitat groups" made me think of Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. Each group had upon it a card telling the story of the tragedy and giving the name of the person and the date when he was tortured to death by the Church for daring to say that the world rotated upon its axis.

Parties of Russians stood around each group morbidly enjoying the show. The effect upon the spectators was extremely interesting. Old people including myself were not particularly impressed, but the young Russians and the young American intellectuals who were trailing around with their college professors as guides were quite delighted at this exposure of "the rot of religion" and several of them expressed themselves forcibly that it was about time similar demonstrations were given in American churches.

After seeing the waxworks we were taken into what had once been a small chapel in the cathedral. The altar had been removed and in its place was a

large bust of Lenin. Before the altar was a table and on the table covered by a glass case was a human body. This body was in an advanced stage of decay, one of the legs had fallen off; the lower jaw had slid to one side and the whole corpse looked as if it were about to collapse. This delightful exhibit was also labeled, but as the writing was in Russian I requested a guide to interpret it for me, and here's the announcement:

THIS IS THE BODY OF SAINT SOMEBODY-OR-OTHER. WE DUG HER UP IN A CEMETERY ABOUT TWO HUNDRED MILES FROM LENINGRAD WHERE HER GRAVE HAD BEEN VISITED BY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE BECAUSE THE CHURCH SAID HER BODY HAD NOT DECAYED. WELL! HERE SHE IS! JUDGE FOR YOURSELF.

Dead bodies have a great attraction for certain types of people and this one was evidently the star attraction in the cathedral.

Once again, we older people were merely disgusted, but the young intellectuals and other Communists thought it was a huge joke. Roars of laughter from a different section caused me to hurry over to what turned out to be the picture gallery, although the pictures were mostly large cartoons crudely drawn. Each taught a lesson that the simplest mind could never forget.

The great feature of this exhibition of "sacred"

pictures was a life-size cartoon of Jesus. He was dressed in a frock coat, top hat, striped trousers, shiny shoes, yellow walking stick with a pair of yellow gloves and an American flag in his right hand. In his left hand was the Union Jack. Jesus had a disgusted look upon his face and from his attitude it was evident that he had just received a violent kick from behind. The artist had drawn what is technically known among cartoonists as a "balloon," and emerging from Jesus' mouth were these words: "I have been exposed! I promised the people Paradise after death, but Lenin has promised them Paradise on earth!"

The cleverest picture, from the point of view of teaching, was a large cartoon showing a football match between the Communist Party and the Church. It was easy to recognize most of the players on both sides. The Communist Party was represented by famous Communists. Lenin of course was the captain of his side. Anyone who had ever attended Sunday school could recognize the players for the Church, because they are all famous in the Bible. Moses, Abraham and others were all clearly shown and appeared to be quite good players, although their costumes looked strange.

I have seen God in many costumes and the last time I saw Him was in *Green Pastures* in which play he appeared as a benevolent old minister, but

I never thought I should live to see God in shorts. God was the goalkeeper, and Lenin had just shot a goal! The football had caught God square in the stomach carrying him clean through the goal with it! The spectators were shown in two groups, peasants with expressions of joy on their faces and a crowd of Catholic clergymen and Jewish rabbis, obviously very much upset!

Standing beside one of the goal posts through which God had just been carried, was the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms.

The teaching of this picture was obvious. God has been kicked out of Russia by the Communist Party.

One of the most blasphemous religious cartoons in Russia is a parody of the famous painting of the Last Supper. The inscription on the side of the cartoon says:

**THE SO-CALLED LAST SUPPER CLEARLY PROVES THAT  
RELIGION ESTABLISHES, PROCLAIMS AND MORALLY  
EXCUSES DRUNKENNESS. TO FIGHT AGAINST RE-  
LIGION IS TO FIGHT AGAINST DRUNKENNESS.**

In the cartoon, Jesus is shown surrounded by his disciples except for one, who has "passed out" and is lying underneath the table among empty bottles and broken plates.

Jesus holds a whisky bottle in his right hand and

a glass in his left, and is making an after-dinner speech:

“Drink all of you, for this is my own distilled whisky, which is being drunk for you, and for us, and for many! Hurrah!”

Plastered all over the walls of the cathedral were pictures too absurd to describe, and the complete story of the Bible told in blasphemous cartoons.

Crowds of peasants, young and old, were walking slowly around the cathedral, but it was very noticeable that the roars of laughter came from the young people and not from the old.

The effect on our *Kungsholm* passengers was practically the same. Elderly people just looked and passed on, but the young intellectuals were delighted. In one section of the cathedral were some very beautiful mosaics, one of which had been carefully removed from its place and lowered to the floor where it could be inspected at close quarters. So exquisite was the workmanship that even at close quarters it was almost impossible to distinguish the separate pieces.

On a card was printed:

THIS IS THE FINEST MOSAIC WORK IN THE WORLD  
BUT EVEN AT ITS BEST IT IS A POOR IMITATION OF AN  
OIL PAINTING. THIS SMALL PIECE OF MOSAIC WORK  
TOOK YEARS TO MAKE AND COST ENOUGH MONEY

TO BUILD A WORKERS' CLUB! WHERE DID THE  
MONEY COME FROM? IT WAS GROUND OUT OF THE  
POOR BY THE CHURCH!

( Religion is supposed to be free in Russia but the quickest way to die of starvation is to go to Church, because sooner or later the churchgoer loses his meal ticket. There are still people who attend church where there is a church to attend, but going to church in Russia is like going to a speakeasy here in America. You know you are doing something that is frowned upon by the Government and sooner or later you get caught. )

There is actually a department whose job it is to destroy religion of all kinds and it is this department that causes the arrest and deportation of thousands of religious people, many of whom are never heard of again. No member of the Communist Party is permitted to take part in any religious ceremony. Marriage in a church is punished by expulsion from the party. Bible circles and Sunday schools are forbidden; in fact, anyone giving religious instruction to the young is guilty of a serious crime. Sunday itself has been abolished. There is no such thing as Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or other days of the week. If you ask a Russian "What is today?" he'll think for a minute and then say "fourteen" or whatever number in the month that particular



day happens to be. Every day in the year is a holiday for someone in Russia, because the Government has carefully arranged that there shall be no universal day of rest. The result makes life terribly monotonous.

After seeing the cathedral we were driven about the streets of Leningrad, given a fairly good luncheon and then driven off to the train that was awaiting to transport us to Moscow.

My impression of Leningrad was of a city in the last stages of dilapidation. Maintenance and general upkeep were conspicuous by their absence. Copping stones of buildings had fallen into the street. Large patches of plaster had fallen off the fronts of the buildings, and as for paint work, most of the woodwork on the buildings seemed to have lost all the paint it ever had and had returned to its original state of just plain wood. The corners of the buildings, especially at busy street intersections, were broken and worn. Doors had no handles and hundreds of windows were devoid of glass. There were no bright colors except the flaming red banners that adorned many of the buildings.

Russians love to put banners up but they never dream of taking them down again, so that many of the buildings were defaced by the rags and tatters of some ancient banner which no one could possibly read.

Busts and portraits of Lenin and Stalin could be counted by the hundreds and I couldn't help thinking that the present régime, which blames the Church for spending the money of the people on useless adornment of churches, must spend thousands of dollars on statues and pictures of prominent Communists. In several places I saw large cartoons of President Hoover entitled in English "The Fathead in the White House" and just as many pictures (not cartoons) of President Roosevelt (who was then running for election) entitled "The Next Communist President of the United States."

During the month that I was in Russia, it was quite evident wherever I went that President Hoover was thoroughly hated, and that Russia had pinned her hopes for recognition on President Roosevelt. To call President Roosevelt a Communist was undoubtedly just as insulting as to call President Hoover a Fathead, but such was the reputation of each in Russia.

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### *Chapter Three*

#### **“KAPOOT”**

**T**HE TRAINS that run between Leningrad and Moscow are called “Propaganda Trains” because they are the cleanest, fastest and most comfortable trains in Russia. The roadbed is well maintained by Russia’s emancipated women, and the journey takes overnight.

We arrived at the station early in the evening and there we found a train consisting mainly of wagons-lits that had been confiscated from France. The carriages were a bit dilapidated but not anything to complain of. We had been advised by the thoughtful officials of the Swedish American Line not to wear clothes that would be conspicuously good, because of giving offense to the Russians whose clothing is conspicuously bad. That is not their fault, of course, but their misfortune; but in spite of the fact that our two hundred American tourists

had been careful to wear their oldest clothes, they looked like a trainload of millionaires and utterly out of place in such a country as Russia.

While waiting for the train to start, I saw a very interesting and significant thing happen. A uniformed attendant walked from one end of the train to the other, carrying in his hand a small package of those rectangular pieces of tissue paper with which we are so familiar in America. Stopping at the door of each toilet, the official carefully counted out six sheets of paper and then placed them in the receptacle. I watched him make his pilgrimage and marveled at the care with which he counted out each ration. As soon as he had gone, I entered the toilet in my carriage and looked at one of these sheets of precious tissue paper. Imagine my surprise when I discovered, printed in red ink in the middle of each sheet, the sickle and the hammer, the Soviet Emblem.

What an interesting lesson this taught! Since returning to America I have read a great many books on Russia that were written before the Revolution. I have also read many modern books on Russia, both for and against, and it appears that one of the great differences between Russia and other countries is that, instead of having three classes of people, upper, middle and lower, Russia has never had but two classes: the upper and the lower; those who

understood the use of this paper and those who did not. Today the former class is dead, in prison or in exile. Class distinction is theoretically extinct in Soviet Russia, and the present class has not the slightest idea of the use of toilet paper, or they would never print the Soviet Emblem in the middle of each sheet!

Evidently this peculiarity of Russians today was well known to the Swedish American Line, because I noticed one of the cruise directors furtively handing rolls of toilet paper to several of the ladies who accepted the unexpected gift with considerable embarrassment. I also noticed that during their four days in Moscow, nothing could separate those same ladies from their precious rolls.

Except for the fact that our train ran over a woman and her small child, the journey to Moscow was uneventful. It is true that the engine driver saw the woman and blew his whistle repeatedly, but it never occurred to him to stop the train until the woman had been decapitated and one of the child's arms torn off. After collecting the torso, head, arm and mangled child, and bundling them into the baggage car, the train proceeded.

Upon arrival in Moscow, we were again met by a fleet of brand-new Lincoln cars and our two hundred cruisers were immediately distributed among Moscow's various hotels. Long before I had as-

sembled my baggage and equipment, the rest of the party had disappeared. Soon we were surrounded by a group of Russian porters who looked like butchers wearing white aprons. I was happy to find that the Intourist had arranged for us to be met by an intelligent Russian girl who spoke English. She carried a small brief case and a purse crammed full of paper roubles. On her head she wore a cotton handkerchief. Her dress was a one piece cotton affair and she wore cotton stockings and a pair of white canvas sneakers.

On seeing at least thirty pieces of baggage including motion picture cameras and several large wooden boxes full of motion picture film, she looked at us in amazement. It took at least ten minutes to convince her that we required every single piece of baggage and that nothing could be stored in the station until we returned to the boat. But having persuaded her that we were not mad and that we would under no circumstances be separated from our precious belongings, she called six of the porters and ordered them to carry the stuff to the roadside, where we waited while she telephoned to Intourist for instructions. After half an hour's delay she returned, pouring with perspiration and with evidence of tears in her eyes, to tell us that a motor car would soon arrive.

"But I cannot understand why you need so much more baggage than the others!" she exclaimed over and over again. In the meantime the six porters had been waiting patiently to be paid for their work. "No, no, no! You must not pay anything! *I* must pay," she exclaimed when I began fumbling in my pocket for a bundle of roubles I had obtained from the official money changers on the boat. But when I saw how much she paid those porters and the nonchalant way she handed out handfuls of paper roubles, I realized that twenty dollars' worth of roubles wouldn't have gone very far in tips! "But do I have to pay for all this?" I inquired nervously. "Oh! No, no, no," she reassured me. "Intourist pays for everything; you pay nothing!" At this stage of the game, not knowing the truth about the relative value of American dollars and paper roubles, I began to wonder how on earth Intourist could possibly make any profit on a tourist who paid ten dollars a day for all expenses! In fact I thought Intourist was an extremely generous organization. Having seen all our baggage stowed away carefully in a small truck we piled into a Lincoln and drove at about sixty miles an hour to the New Moscow Hotel.

The New Moscow Hotel is beautifully situated on the banks of the Moskva River, right opposite the Kremlin, but it is anything but "new." It must

have been started before the Revolution and it has never been completed.

The lobby of the hotel was full of tourists of all nationalities, but mostly Germans and English. Baggage was piled in heaps everywhere. Intourist guides were rushing about like old hens trying to gather their scattered chicks. The one wretched man in charge of the checkroom seemed to have given up hope. He couldn't understand English, much less speak it, so all he did was to sit on a stool and watch the baggage pile up around him. Opposite his desk was an information bureau and a clerk who seemed to have been specially trained not to know anything except how to cash Intourist Travelers' Checks. I tried him with an American Express Traveler's Check but he politely informed me that he had no American money. He was willing to give me a mixture of European money that looked like a miscellaneous assortment of old hardware with an occasional bit of English silver thrown in to make it look like money; but just as I was beginning to get disgusted, our little guide rushed up to explain once more that she would pay everything, and that we had no need of money. In the midst of the general confusion, our thirty pieces of baggage arrived and the hotel lobby became a Bedlam!

After registering our names we entered the ele-



vator with the first load of baggage; the elevator man closed the door, turned on the switch and nothing happened! He looked at the switch for a minute and then exclaimed, "*Kapoot!*"

"*Kapoot?*" I inquired. I thought I was learning Russian but it turned out to be the German word "*Kaput*" which means "It's bust! it won't work!"

For a few moments the elevator man fiddled about with the switch and then with a shrug of his shoulders, he reopened the door and led the way up several flights of stairs to our bedroom.

As soon as we entered, all our troubles were forgotten, because no bedroom could have been more gorgeously furnished. I am no authority on antiques but I had a vivid recollection of staying with a wealthy friend in Chicago who had purchased two chairs and a small settee for fourteen thousand dollars, that looked exactly like the furniture in this bedroom. The chairs were gilt and upholstered with old French tapestry. The coverlets on the twin beds were old brocade and the curtains looked as if they ought to have been under a glass case in some museum. Yet in the midst of this lovely furniture was one of the cheapest and shoddiest looking writing desks ever sold by a mail order house in America.

While we were examining the furniture and going into rhapsodies about the splendid view of the

Kremlin that we had from our windows, our baggage began to arrive. Russian porters have feet like elephants and the whole hotel shuddered every time one of these white-aproned giants entered with a trunk or heavy wooden box slung over his shoulder as if it weighed about five pounds instead of sixty.

Being hot and dusty after our night on the train from Leningrad, I entered the private bathroom, turned on the tap, and nothing happened!

After ringing every electric bell I could find, without result, I went to the door of the bedroom and saw sitting at the end of the corridor a man with a long beard who looked like a tramp. Knowing no Russian I just yelled “Ahoy there!” and it worked. Leading him into the bathroom I pointed to the tap. After twisting the tap and almost wrenching it from its place, he turned to me and said: “*Kapoot!*” That was all I needed to know. There was nothing to be done about it.

The tap had worked once upon a time, perhaps before the Revolution, but all the plumbers in the country had probably been executed or exiled together with the rest of Russia’s intellectuals, and as the present generation have no use for plumbing or any other such bourgeois luxuries the wash basin and bath had fallen into disuse.

By this time I had been seized with a desire to

explore our private toilet, so I opened the door, unfortunately! On the floor were three ordinary bricks, placed about a foot apart and leading to the toilet. Evidently some previous occupant of our suite had brought them in from the street, where they had fallen from some building that was in the course of going *kapoot*, and had used them as stepping stones to his goal. I found them not only convenient but very necessary.

Mr. Will Durant in one of his excellent articles on Russia, in the *Saturday Evening Post*, said that the state of the Russian toilets was due to the poor aim of the Russians. Personally I am convinced that they don't even take aim, because the condition of this and every other such place of retirement I saw in Russia was simply frightful.

Here is a country that has imported specialists for the last fifteen years, to put herself in order, and the most famous specialist that America ever produced has been utterly forgotten. I refer of course to Chic Sale. Eventually Russia will learn how badly he is needed, and then Chic Sale will make a fortune.

To appreciate properly what Russians mean when they say "*Kapoot*," I will give an illustration.

A large apartment house had just been built in Moscow, for the use of workers who had been accustomed to live in the wretched hovels that were pro-

vided for them in the “old days.” This house was complete with every modern bourgeois luxury including even an electric bell at the entrance. Why there should have been such a thing as an electric bell is hard to understand, because Russians rarely have social callers, and the G. P. U. do not announce their visits; but anyway, an electric bell of the “push” type had been installed.

As soon as its presence was discovered, all the little boys in the district amused themselves by taking it in turns to push the button, until one day the button fell out and was of course immediately appropriated by one of the youngsters as a souvenir. The absence of the button exposed the metal spring inside the cover, and it was soon discovered that the bell would ring just as well by pushing the spring as by pushing the button. One day, however, the cover of the bell was unscrewed by one of the boys, who took it away thus leaving the whole mechanism of the bell exposed. Still it would ring quite well and even after the spring had broken and disappeared together with the push button and bell cover, the bell could still be rung by touching together the two ends of the copper wire.

At last, even the copper wires couldn't stand this constant bending, so they broke off close to the wall in which they were embedded, and the bell was then pronounced *kapoot*. No one ever dreamt

of repairing the bell and as for charging the batteries that worked it, their very existence was probably unknown to anyone in the building.

(Entire absence of general upkeep or repairs is typical of the average Russian building and the same applies to their machinery. Beware of a Russian chauffeur! He may be the best driver on earth and he might even think of filling the car with gasoline, but he wouldn't think of such things as lubrication, filling the radiator or putting water in the battery. He will drive the car until it stops and then it is *kapoot*. )

For the next three days we "did" Moscow with the rest of the party from the *Kungsholm*. Each morning the Lincoln cars would line up outside the hotel and the program of sightseeing under the guidance of the Intourist guides was carried out with the regularity of clockwork.

We saw model hospitals, baby farms, workers' co-operative stores, workers' cafeterias, anti-religious museums, motion pictures, the Kremlin and Lenin's Tomb. Luncheon was always served to the strains of a fine orchestra, and although the food wasn't anything to write home and tell Mother about, it wasn't bad. I noticed one thing at luncheon that caused quite a sensation among our "cruisers." There were always a few empty tables in the dining room

that were apparently reserved for Russian guests, and naturally we were all anxious to see them arrive.

When we were half through our luncheon, about a dozen workers, not too clean and looking very workmanlike, slouched into the dining room and took their places at the unoccupied tables. They were then served with food that looked rather better than ours together with bottles of wine and all that goes to make luncheon a cheerful occasion. Having scoffed their food they snatched up their caps and left the room, to hurry back to the factory of course.\*

One dear old “cruiser” turned to me and said:

“Isn’t it wonderful to see how these laborers can afford to eat in a hotel like this! You’d never see such a thing in America. Men like that would probably be in a bread line in Times Square!”

I expect these same dear people are now spreading the good news all over America of the happy lot of the Russian worker, and probably delivering lectures in their local woman’s club on “The Great Experiment.”

Two young Americans who were stopping at the New Moscow Hotel, desiring to look like the real thing, purchased some workers’ clothes, had their heads shaved and then returned to the hotel. Mistaking them for workmen, the hotel porter refused

\* We went to this hotel after the cruisers left and it was closed.

to admit them and it was some time before they were able to establish their identity and gain access to their rooms! I saw this happen myself and discussed the incident with the young men.

Each afternoon a lecture was arranged for those who wished to understand what Russia was trying to do and what Communism really meant. I attended one of these lectures and had a marvelous time.

The lecturer was a red-faced woman about thirty years of age. She wore a red bow and was dressed in a white cotton dress with the usual cotton stockings and rubber-soled sneakers.

Her speech was obviously memorized and had been given so often that she was able to make signals to waiters without disturbing the flow of her conversation, which was East Side New York. She must have been an American or have spent several years in the neighborhood of Union Square to have acquired her style. If she had been asked to pronounce Thirty-third Street, she would have said, "toity-toid."

Her subject this particular afternoon was the status of the Russian woman, marriage, divorce and birth control. The moment birth control was mentioned, she had her audience with her completely. I never heard a person discuss this matter more frankly than on this occasion. The most interesting

part of her lecture was the Question-and-Answer period.

Faint voice from the audience: “What is the usual method of birth control please?”

“Abortion!” snapped the speaker without a moment’s hesitation.

“Every woman is entitled to as many abortions as she likes free of charge. There’s no danger. Our girls don’t have to sneak off to some quack and pay for an illegal operation that might result in death. If a girl doesn’t want a baby, she just goes to the nearest abortion station and the operation takes three minutes; our doctors are specialists but the girl is compelled to remain in the hospital for five days after the operation!” \*

I gathered that these abortion stations are about as common as filling stations in America.

Another faint voice from the audience:

“Would the speaker please tell us how this freedom in sexual matters has affected the morals of the Russian people?”

Without a second’s hesitation: “Russia has a population of one hundred and sixty million but the latest statistics show that she has only sixty-three prostitutes!”

I couldn’t help marveling at her degree of accu-

\* For further particulars on abortion and the destruction of family life in Russia, the reader is referred to *Red Virtue*, by Ella Winter.



racy but I thought that in a country where love is absolutely free, naturally, the oldest profession on earth couldn't possibly thrive.

In spite of this free abortion service, I counted over seventy pregnant women in the streets of Moscow in one morning, so I asked my guide how these women managed when the baby arrived and who looked after it. She informed me that not only was all medical attention free, but that the mother was given several weeks' (I forget how many) holiday on full pay and then she took her baby to the factory with her in the morning, nursed it at one breast while the milk was artificially pumped from the other, in order that the baby might receive its milk without interfering with the mother in the factory. She then told me that the mother, if she wished, could place the baby in a regular baby farm to be reared quite independently of the mother herself, and that the child would be cared for far better than the mother could possibly care for it.

The girl who was telling me this was about nineteen years old. She had exceptionally gentle manners at table and from all outward appearances, such as small hands, small feet and trim ankles, she looked as if she had sprung from bourgeois stock.

"How about your own mother?" I inquired. "My mother!" she replied scornfully. "If she had had the sense to send me and my brothers and sisters

to a government home for children, and gone into a factory herself instead of wasting her time at home housekeeping, I should have a good position now instead of being an Intourist guide!”

“Don’t you like being a guide?” I asked.

“Oh, it’s all right for a time, but I’m glad I don’t have to do this kind of work all the year round! I get sick of answering foolish questions all day.”

“What do you do when you aren’t a guide?” I inquired.

“I’m a school-teacher and I get four hundred roubles a month!” she answered.

By this time a group of passengers had joined us and among them happened to be two American school-teachers.

“Did she say four hundred roubles a month for school-teaching? Ask her whether she teaches in a high school.”

“Where do you teach?” I inquired.

“Kindergarten!” she replied.

The two American school-teachers immediately went into a huddle to work out how much four hundred roubles a month was, and after deep thought they arrived at two hundred dollars!

These same school-teachers are probably telling all their fellow teachers in America that Russia pays her kindergarten school-teachers two hundred dollars a month with free abortions thrown in—or

free maternity attention and several weeks' holiday on full pay for presenting the State with a baby.

Long before the three days were up, these Intourist guides had done a thorough job of enlightening the minds of the two hundred tourists in our party, as to the benefits of Communism. As to how many of them fell for this I cannot say, but I do know that quite a large percentage of them returned to the boat thoroughly sold on Communism. In the meantime, Russia laughs up her sleeve at the dumbbells who are willing to pay Intourist for the privilege of becoming Russian agents for the spread of the disease.

One of the most obvious things in Russia is propaganda among her own people. Every telephone pole, I noticed, had upon it a loud speaker, but not for music or entertainment. Speeches, speeches and more speeches, for twenty-three hours out of every twenty-four. I was informed that the Russian radio stations are so powerful that no person could possibly hear any program broadcast outside of Russia.

You cannot walk far along a Russian sidewalk before you come to a large notice board, usually covered with glass to protect the notices, as paper is extremely scarce. Very often you will see a large map of the United States with pictorial illustrations showing the principal products of each state in the

Union. It will be news to Americans to know that the chief products of every state in the United States are cannons, machine guns, war airplanes and electric chairs! American workmen are shown in gangs with a fierce-looking foreman driving them on to work with a whip. In the middle of the map is a large picture of Uncle Sam, head and shoulders only, wearing his striped top hat. On the side of the hat is the dollar sign and on top of the hat is a worker being electrocuted in an electric chair!

I saw these maps from Leningrad to Erivan in Armenia, and I have no doubt that they are placarded all over Russia as far as the Pacific.

Similar maps of the British Empire are displayed everywhere. England is depicted as the home of slavery. Africa is still the great source of supply for slaves, who are shown being driven in chains to the coast by Englishmen carrying guns and whips.

Americans will wonder how it is possible for Russians to be so stupid as to believe such nonsense, but Russians are not stupid; they are merely ignorant. Every day of the year, parties of peasants are led around Red Square and especially shown the spot where Ivan the Terrible caused thousands of people to be tortured to death, and even took part in torturing them himself. The guides get these people worked into a terrible state of indignation at the horrors that were perpetrated upon the de-

fenseless people by Russia's czars, but they fail to explain that Ivan the Terrible was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth.

It wouldn't be any good if they did explain this, because none of them has ever heard of Queen Elizabeth anyway. But the clever thing about this exploitation of the misdeeds of Ivan the Terrible is that the peasants blame it all upon the last czar.

It is like the Irishman who had been forbidden by his priest to deal with a certain Jewish tradesman.

"Why?" said Pat.

"Because he is a Jew and the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus," answered the priest.

Whereupon Pat immediately rushed down the street, entered the store and gave the Jew a terrible beating.

"Why do you treat me like this? What have I done?" wailed the Jew.

"You are responsible for the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus," answered Pat as he gave him another sock in the eye.

"But that happened two thousand years ago!" moaned the Jew.

"Maybe so, but I've only just heard about it," said Pat.

To give an idea of the amazing ignorance of the younger generation in Russia, when it comes to ordinary general knowledge, I once asked a young Com-

munist girl if she would care to spend a few weeks with us in America as our guest, so that she could see for herself that the American workers were not so badly off as she had been taught, but she said: “I have no desire ever to go to America where people lead objectless lives and live on oranges!”

I couldn't help laughing at the idea of living on oranges, but I found that she was quite serious, and imagined that I, not being of the so-called working class, never did any work, but lived by exploiting poor people while I spent most of my time eating expensive fruit. I found out that this same girl, who was over twenty, had never even seen an orange or a banana; the only fruit she had actually tasted were apples, and if the apples she had eaten were anything like the ones I saw on sale in Moscow, they were half-rotten windfalls that would have insulted the taste of an American pig.

(One morning while having breakfast in the New Moscow Hotel with this same girl, I was opening a boiled egg when it exploded in my face! When I myself exploded and thrust the egg away, she was quite angry with me for being wasteful of good food; so I handed her the egg, which she apparently enjoyed.)

It then occurred to me that she didn't even know what a new-laid egg looked like. She had lived in Moscow ever since she could remember and had

never seen a farm. She explained that the farmers always brought their eggs to market, but what she didn't realize was that the Russian peasant first tried to hatch the eggs, since chickens are much more valuable than eggs. Those eggs that do not hatch are brought to the Moscow market! This accounts for the fact that an omelette in the New Moscow Hotel frequently looks like the Stars and Stripes.

Our first night in the hotel passed uneventfully, because we were so tired out that we didn't notice that we had plenty of company, but in the morning our ankles were covered with bites — which we hopefully blamed on mosquitoes!

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## *Chapter Four*

### MOSCOW (CONDUCTED)

**R**ED SQUARE is the most famous place in Russia and the most sacred spot in Red Square is the Tomb of Lenin. An exiled Russian writer remarked sarcastically, "Lenin is Lenin, and Stalin is his prophet!"

Every day of the year thousands of people visit Lenin's tomb as if it were the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem; in fact nowadays, instead of making pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Russians travel from all parts of the Soviet Union to gaze, bareheaded, at the embalmed body of the God of Communism.

In fact the only place where Russians always deport themselves with common decency and orderliness is in the apparently endless queue that slowly files through the mausoleum of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin.

As taking photographs of the Mausoleum and the



Kremlin was forbidden, I spent most of the morning obtaining written permission to take motion pictures in Red Square. Having obtained the permit, we set out with an Intourist guide and set up our cameras. Just as we were about to start cranking we were surrounded by Red soldiers, and in spite of the frantic objections of the guide we were placed under arrest. Leaving us in the midst of the army, she rushed off to the main gate of the Kremlin, where she telephoned the Commandant. In a few minutes she returned, triumphantly waving a permit signed by the Commandant himself, whereupon we were released.

The attitude of the soldiers and their officers immediately became most friendly. They even rearranged the queue of waiting worshipers so that we could get a series of pictures, showing them entering the tomb. To be arrested by soldiers with fixed bayonets was a thrill the first time, but before we left Russia it became quite boring.

Having secured all the pictures we wanted, I placed myself at the end of the long queue, ready to wait all day if necessary, to see Lenin, but the moment they saw me take up my place, the officers in charge of the sentries courteously conducted me to the head of the queue and held back the proletariat while I entered.

Extremely simple and looking very much as if

it had been built of blocks in a kindergarten class, the Mausoleum is one of the most striking pieces of architecture in the world. There isn't a curve in the whole structure and the materials used are blocks of semi-precious stones and marbles from every part of the Soviet Union. Although there are bands of black, dark red is the predominant color. Over the portal of the tomb is the name "Lenin" in Russian characters. So highly polished is the masonry that the people and traffic in Red Square can be seen, reflected in the stone as if it were a mirror.

Two sentries guard the entrance and see that no one enters without first removing his hat. The majority of the people do so without being told, but an occasional "hayseed" from the country forgets and is roughly reminded by the soldiers.

I haven't found two people whose descriptions of Lenin quite agree. There were three of us in our party and although we compared notes the moment we emerged into the daylight, none of us could agree whether Lenin's hands were folded on his chest or not. To check up on my own observations I reentered the tomb.

Upon entering, you walk down twenty-three steps and then find yourself in a small square room in the center of which, lying under a glass case, is the embalmed body of the founder of the Soviet Republics.

Since no one is permitted to stop walking, it is extremely difficult to observe details, especially on the first visit when you are more or less shocked by the extraordinary exhibition. Two red soldiers guard his sacred body, one at his feet and the other at his head. They stand at ease and their eyes follow you as you slowly walk around the glass case. Talking is forbidden.

Every picture of Lenin in Russia shows him with black hair, so that it is a surprise to find that he has red hair and a closely cropped red beard. He is simply dressed in a new khaki uniform that looks very cheap, and as if it has been made on a sewing machine by an amateur tailor. His head rests on a bright red pillow and up to the waist his body is covered with a shawl or coverlet.

His right hand is clenched and lies straight at his side. His left arm is slightly bent so that his left hand can rest open upon his body. On the lapel of his tunic he wears two orders, that look strangely simple and shoddy in comparison with the orders usually worn by men of such eminence in capitalistic countries. The orders worn by Lenin look more like the badges or buttons that are made by the million in America.

The most extraordinary thing about Lenin is his square forehead and his color. He looks as if he were asleep, and does not look anything like a

corpse. So natural does he look that you expect to see him breathe at any moment, until you suddenly remember with a shock that his head is empty, and that his brain is preserved in a bottle, in a museum. Immediately behind his head are two round holes in the glass case, to admit the hands of the person responsible for keeping the body presentable.

On my second visit to the tomb, try as I would, I was unable to discover how the tomb was illuminated. The whole room and especially the glass case are bathed in a rosy light, but no electric lamps are visible.

On returning to the hotel, I found groups of passengers arguing as to whether the body of Lenin was genuine or merely a wax model. The waxes were in the majority, but personally I believe that the body is real because I took particular notice of the fingernails on his open hand. I noticed that the flesh of his fingers had shrunk and was receding from the nails, exposing an unnatural amount of the moons.

Russia claims to have no religion, and the true Communist is essentially an atheist. He revels in his godlessness and is a fanatic when it comes to stamping out religion. He takes especial delight in desecrating churches and defacing or destroying anything that was formerly regarded as holy. Rev-

erence is the very last thing you expect to find in a Communist, yet in the presence of the body of Lenin no people could be more reverent. I watched their faces closely, expecting to find them merely morbidly curious, but on the contrary, many of the people gave Lenin only a fleeting glance and then passed reverently out of the chamber. Every moment I expected these people to cross themselves or to bow as they used to before a shrine, but they did not. Men and boys carrying their caps in their hands, women and girls with shawls round their heads, slowly filed past the body. Every face was solemn; there wasn't a whisper; the only sound was the muffled shuffle of their feet.

Once outside the tomb, they walked away just as reverently, many of them to see the long row of graves along the wall of the Kremlin immediately behind the Mausoleum, among them the grave of the famous American Communist, John Reed, who died in Moscow in 1920.

As we were returning to the hotel, we happened to see two funerals, although until we actually saw the coffins no one would have suspected that they were funerals.

The first was evidently that of some poor worker. The coffin, crudely made of pine boards, had been placed anyhow in a dilapidated four-wheeled cart, drawn by an even more dilapidated horse and driven

by a man in rags. Walking behind the cart were a man and a woman who were talking together as if they were in no way connected with the corpse. As the cart bumped over the cobblestones, the coffin slid about from one side to the other. There was no sign of mourning whatever, nor did passers-by seem to pay the slightest attention to the gruesome sight.

The second funeral must have been that of a boy or girl who belonged to some organization like the Young Pioneers. In this case, the cart carrying the coffin was covered with all kinds of red banners, and was followed by about fifty boys and girls carrying red flags and banners. The children were apparently quite unconcerned and showed no signs of mourning, but walking behind them was an old woman with tears streaming down her face. She was carrying in her hand a small bunch of wild-flowers.

I couldn't find out where the dead were buried, but I presume that it was anywhere convenient, because, except for people like Lenin or the wife of Stalin, Communists have no use for expensive cemeteries or graves.

{Tombstones are far too valuable to be left on graves, and cemeteries are a waste of good space. The quickest way to dispose of a bourgeois cemetery is to get a steam shovel to tear up the grave-

stones and then a steam roller to roll out the graves as flat as a pancake. Cemeteries make excellent sites for factories, playgrounds or parking spaces. Many a building in Russia has been at least partially constructed with gravestones and materials from demolished churches. '

I cannot help thinking of the immense amount of valuable stone and marble in Woodlawn Cemetery, New York, and wondering what the space will be used for when America hauls down the Stars and Stripes and substitutes the Red Flag of the Soviets! This is not as unthinkable as it may seem to some readers, since there are places in America where this substitution has already taken place.

Our third day in Moscow was spent sightseeing in the Kremlin. After listening to the conversation of some of the tourists in the lobby of the hotel, I think that there must be a good many people who have no idea what a Kremlin is and have not the courage to ask!

In the majority of medieval Russian cities, the central part was surrounded by strong walls with towers and battlements and sometimes by a moat filled with water. This section of the city was called The Kremlin and it was simply a fortress that contained within its walls the ducal palace, government buildings, houses of the leading dignitaries and the principal cathedrals and churches.

The Moscow Kremlin is probably the best preserved example of a kremlin in Russia. Until the year 1485 the walls of the Kremlin were built of oak but since then they have been constructed of stone. The present walls are of pale pink brick, and entered by five gates. The main entrance is called Spasskiye Vorota, The Gate of Salvation! and opens on to Red Square. In the tower above the gate is a famous peal of bells from which is now rung "The International" at midday and six o'clock, and the Russian Revolutionary Funeral March at three o'clock and at nine at night. These bells were erected by an Englishman in 1625.

Of all the wonderful things to be seen in the Kremlin, the most astonishing is the collection of royal and Church treasure. Not even the treasure cave of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves can compare with the enormous quantities of gold, silver, precious stones and exquisite works of art that are stored in heaps in this Central Museum.

There is so much more stored away in the vaults that, although the vast rooms are filled to the ceiling with treasure of inestimable value, the exhibition is frequently changed. I should say that if all the pearls, diamonds, rubies and other precious stones were gathered together they would fill a freight car. A priest's robe covered with ten thousand real pearls would be quite an attractive exhibit



in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but such a robe in the Central Museum in the Kremlin passes almost unnoticed, because they are to be seen by the dozen. Apparently the former czars of Russia thought nothing of ordering a complete set of harness encrusted with diamonds; and that doesn't mean a few sparklers here and there, it means completely covered with precious stones so that not a scrap of leather could be seen. Even the shoes for the horses were solid silver with silver nails.

Needless to say, the guides take good care to point out that all this treasure was stolen from the people by the Church and the czars.

I noticed that most of the stones of large size, larger than a few carats, had been replaced by imitation ones, and I was informed that nearly all the very large diamonds were sold to a French combine several years ago.

If the Russian Government were suddenly to place on the market all the precious stones they now possess, they could ruin the present prices.

The late Russian royal family evidently had expensive tastes, to judge from the collection of Easter eggs they gave one another. Many of these gorgeous eggs were encrusted with diamonds and had upon them a miniature of the person to whom the egg was given. The smallest of the eggs was worth

about \$10,000, and utterly useless except as an example of the jewelers' art.

The cathedrals and churches inside the Kremlin are of course intensely interesting from a historic, as well as an architectural, standpoint. Holy relics such as a nail from the true Cross, the original Crown of Thorns and other similar religious treasures are exhibited, with sarcastic labels.

Somehow these churches seem to have lost completely their atmosphere of sanctity; they are just museums and would be far more attractive if they were in ruins like the churches of Visby. At present they are befouled and defiled by the people who enter them; and I had a feeling as I walked through these once sacred buildings that God had forsaken them for ever and not even the devil was able to make himself comfortable in them.

One exhibit that was particularly ridiculed was a collection of golden models of various parts of the human body, such as legs, arms, ears, noses, fingers, toes, hands, and so on. "If a person had a sore leg, he would have a small golden leg made for him by a jeweler and then present this golden leg to the priest who would bless it and add it to the Church treasury. This cured the sore leg, *perhaps!*" Such was the explanation given to me by the guide, who told me that neither she nor any of her girl friends believed in such nonsense as God.

"Does your mother believe in God?" I asked. "Oh, yes!" she answered. "But then she is old and doesn't know any better."

The people of Russia today can be divided into two sections, the Old and the Young. The dividing line is about the age of thirty. Excepting some of the leaders of the Communist Party, most Communists are young people who have never known any other state of living than the Communistic state. People over thirty can still remember the old days. The people who say that Russia under the czars was far worse than under Stalin should have heard the joke that was said to be the latest one in August, 1932, in Moscow.

Two Russian workers were discussing this very subject when one of them exclaimed, "If the Czar would only come back, I'd kiss his toe!"

"Liar!" exclaimed his companion. "You would not kiss the Czar's toe."

"Why wouldn't I?" inquired the worker angrily.

"Because the queue would be too long!" laughed the other.

Every city I visited in Russia was a city of queues. Not only bread lines, but butter lines, meat lines, fruit lines, clothes lines, and every other kind of line you can think of except one. There is never a queue outside a public toilet. They just don't wait.

The only line that is a regular daily line, year

in and year out, is the bread line. Other lines are spasmodic affairs, and it is often a matter of weeks between butter lines. There is usually no butter to line up for, but when a supply arrives in town people will wait twenty-four hours for an ounce, and perhaps not get any at all when their turn comes.

So far we had been provided with fairly good food, but I strongly suspect that the Swedish American Line was taking no chances with its passengers and that a good deal of the food provided for us in Leningrad and Moscow came from the good ship *Kungsholm*.

Before we had left the boat, one of the passengers gave us a package which we didn't open until we arrived in Moscow, when we found that it was a present from the manager of the Swedish State Railways which he had secured from the cook on the *Kungsholm*. The package contained a pound of tea, a large package of Swedish bread, and one foot of Swedish sausage!

We laughed when we saw the sausage, little dreaming that the same sausage was going to be rationed out in the thinnest possible slices and served to three starving people for the next month. I really believe that the sausage saved our lives, because without it we might have given way completely to the pangs of hunger and started eating

the filthy trash that we saw being eaten in Southern Russia where the people were dying like flies in many places—as Mr. Walter Duranty states: “Not from starvation, but from illness caused by malnutrition.”

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## Chapter Five

### MOSCOW (UNCONDUCTED)

AFTER three days of strenuous sightseeing, our fellow passengers returned by special train to Leningrad, taking with them numerous sacred ikons, silver chalices, jeweled snuffboxes, and valuable sacred vestments purchased from the government stores that deal exclusively in such things. If this were all it wouldn't matter so much, but in addition to these souvenirs many of them returned to America full of enthusiasm for the Great Experiment and the Five-Year Plan. Everything they had read in books by the recognized authorities on Russia had turned out to be true.

They had seen for themselves that the Government does look after babies in crèches; that workers *do* live in model apartment houses even if the electric bells are *kapoot*; that laborers *are* able to take their meals in the best hotels; that trains are com-

fortable; that theaters are free; that streets are crowded with fine automobiles; that the reason paper of all kinds is scarce in Russia is that Russia exports all her paper in order to secure foreign money with which to buy American machinery.

In fact, they had had the most interesting, even if not the most comfortable, experience in their lives. To only a small percentage did it occur that they had been conducted around like a lot of sheep and that what they had seen was precisely what the Russians *wanted* them to see.

Many of these perfectly good and honest souls have now become, whether they think so or not, Russian agents for the spreading of the Gospel of Communism. That this was not true of all the passengers was shown by the fact that after reaching the comfortable *Kungsholm* the first meeting on the boat, at which the Russian visit was discussed, broke up in disorder.

"What impressed you most in Russia?" was one of the questions put to a group of tourists, sight-seeing in Moscow.

"The wonderful enthusiasm of the young Communists!" exclaimed one dear old parlor Bolshevik ecstatically.

"The stink of their toilets!" growled an elderly business man.

"The complete extinction of prostitution!" shrieked an elderly spinster.

"The marvelous freedom of the sexes!" remarked a young college girl.

"That word '*kapoot*,'" laughed several people.

"The ferocity of their bedbugs," complained another.

"If all Americans could see Russia as it is today, and all Russians see America, both would stop talking nonsense about one another," added the wisest man.

The whole trouble about this Russian business is ignorance; but while I am ready to admit that I know only what I myself have experienced, during a month's visit, I can safely say that I, in my partial ignorance of Russia, am an authority compared with the abysmal ignorance of practically all Russians concerning the conditions of the American working people and the American form of government.

Miss Katherine Mayo has often been accused of lying and British propaganda in her book *Mother India*, and while this little effort of mine will probably be equally condemned by people who have never spent a month off the beaten track in Russia, I maintain that I went to Russia with a sympathetic mind, and that my observations and experiences as recorded in this book are absolutely true and similar to the experiences of many other travelers who, for reasons of their own, have refrained from expressing themselves publicly.

The morning of our first unconducted day in



Moscow we descended to the dining room of the New Moscow Hotel for breakfast. Our cruise friends had all disappeared but their places had been taken by a crowd of people who were seeing Russia on a conducted tour arranged for them by an organization known as the Open Road. I soon got into conversation with one of them and discovered that by far the cheapest way of becoming a Russian agent was to travel under the auspices of the Open Road, as it cost only five dollars a day for all expenses.

After a long wait, a dirty-looking man in his undershirt approached us and stood beside our table. Could it be possible that this smelly individual was the waiter? What had become of the smart-looking men who waited upon us while the *Kungsholm* crowd were in town? There was no sign of them.

"Meal ticket please!" demanded the owner of the dirty undershirt.

"Where is your ticket?" he persisted, as he waved a bundle of greasy tickets in my face.

"We have no meal ticket," I explained, whereupon he turned on his heel and started serving another table whose occupants did have meal tickets.

Just then a man approached.

"Have you not gone back to the *Kungsholm*?" he inquired.

It was a foolish question, but I replied "No!"

"Then you must see the manager of Intourist," he explained. "You cannot get food without a meal ticket!"

Happily the office of Intourist was in the same hotel, so after leaving the dining room with our early morning appetite unappeased we followed our new friend up a flight of stairs into a room that was humming with activity. Everyone seemed to be talking at once in all the languages I had ever heard. Several girl clerks were busy at typewriters, apparently taking no notice whatever of the crowd of puzzled tourists who surrounded them. There were Americans, English, Germans, Negroes, Japanese and Chinese, all interested in the Great Experiment and trying to arrange tours to various parts of the Soviet Union.

Telephones were ringing furiously, but no one took the slightest notice. Without any delay we were conducted into a small office in which sat a bald-headed man having a violent argument in Russian over the telephone. After a few moments I had learned the Russian for Yes and No. Dar — Dar — Dar — Dar — Neitt — Neitt — Neittt — Neittttttt! at which he banged the telephone back on its receiver and turned to us with a smile.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Wells!" he exclaimed to my astonishment. "I thoroughly enjoyed your lectures on the *Kungsholm*! How is it that you

haven't returned with your party on board the boat?"

So this must be the man whose presence on board the *Kungsholm* was spotted by my friend the bartender!

I was still doing my utmost to understand a strange people and was most anxious to do nothing that would upset the Intourist officials. It is true that I didn't admire the sanitary arrangements, but beyond that Russia and Russians had only made me smile. I still had a full stomach, and I had regarded my arrest in Red Square as one of those little accidents that happen in the best-regulated families. Had I known what was coming I never would have taken my wife with me.

Free love, abortions, easy marriage and easier divorce were matters that concerned Communists. I accepted them, along with the anti-religious museums, as things I had come to learn about. I was in good health and was looking forward to a better time when I got out into what we call in America, "God's open air." I had visions of camping comfortably in the country, laying in a stock of camp supplies and at least having as pleasant a time as I would have in Central Africa or the jungles of Malaya.

I wouldn't even have complained if I had had to live as I did in Lapland, even become lousy! I

was completely ignorant of what was in store for me after leaving Moscow, or I would have taken the first train out of Russia, and let Noah's Ark remain on Ararat forever!

"I should be honored if you would accept a copy of my latest book!" I beamed, feeling delighted that he had heard my African and Malay lectures. At this stage of the game I was carrying with me several copies of *Six Years in the Malay Jungle* and *In Coldest Africa* for presentation under such circumstances.

Having autographed one of my books and presented it to him, I felt that we should have no more trouble with soldiers and that the doors would be flung open to a struggling author!

"How long do you propose to stay here?" he inquired.

"One month!" I replied.

"Where are you going?" he continued.

"To Mount Ararat!" I answered with a thrill at the thought that soon I would be on my way to check up on Old Man Noah!

"Mount Ararat? Why, that is in Turkey!" he said with a look of amazement on his face.

"I know that!" I answered. "But of course I do not want to waste a month of my time traveling to Mount Ararat via the Mediterranean and Constantinople, when you can travel so simply by train to Turkey."

"But I do not understand at all. Why do you want to go to Mount Ararat?" inquired the Russian.

"I'm looking for Noah's Ark!"

The expression on his face changed; he almost smiled but checked himself.

"I will take the matter up and arrange everything for you," he said with rather a contemptuous attitude. "Better take these meal tickets; your tour commences today. Come and see me this afternoon."

The interview was over, so off we rushed to catch the dining room before it closed. I noticed that the tickets he had handed to me were for three people, three meals a day apiece. The tickets were colored green and white and each was divided into three parts by perforations. Unfortunately the tickets were clearly marked "Breakfast, Luncheon, Dinner," and a guide warned us that unused meal tickets that were detached from the perforations were useless.

The same man in the undershirt waited upon us and after collecting the three breakfast tickets, he returned with a tray upon which were three glasses of straw-colored tea, three pieces of stale cheese and three liberal slices of black bread.

There was no milk or lemon for the tea but we were given three large lumps of sugar that attracted a swarm of black flies all through the meal.

The cheese looked as if it had been served to several generations of tourists before us. It was covered with dust and had curled up like large potato chips. Three weeks later we would gladly have eaten it, but to do so at this first unconducted breakfast was impossible.

(The black bread looked inviting so I started to eat it, but before I had eaten half, I had accumulated a regular museum collection of miscellaneous articles, including a broken button, several pieces of old matches, a small nail, and a healthy piece of chewed string. Eating black bread in Russia is much like eating shad in America. You are continually removing *débris* from your mouth and placing it beside your plate. I have so often been accused of lying, in connection with my description of Soviet food, that I am relieved at last to be backed up by the *New York Times*. Featured on the front page of the July 13, 1933, issue is a special cable from Walter Duranty in which he tells us that five Soviet cooks are to die for putting hair and nails into somebody's soup. Of course the cooks were Kulaks!)

Breakfast being a "washout," we decided to go to a hotel where most of the passengers from the *Kungsholm* had been royally entertained. We then discovered that all the Lincoln cars had disappeared.

"Where are the cars?" I asked the doorman, who

looked at me as if he had never heard of such a thing. Apparently the Lincoln cars came out only when the cruise steamers came in.

"How do you get around?" I then asked.

"You can go by street car, droshky, or walk," he replied.

Moscow, of course, has street cars, but you have to wait in a queue for hours to get on, and when you are on you wish you were off!

Droshkies were plentiful. A droshky is a horse carriage. In the days of the Czar, the carriages were comfortable and the horses well fed; as for the drivers, they always wore uniforms that were upholstered in an extraordinary manner, making the thinnest driver look like the fat man at a circus. Today the carriages are *kapoot*, the drivers are in rags, and most of the horses look as if they were going to cross their front legs and go to sleep at any moment. They are plentiful enough and well patronized, so I hailed a droshky.

"How much to the Metropole Hotel?" I inquired.

"Forty roubles!" he replied.

Thank Heaven I had the sense to ask the price first! Forty roubles meant twenty dollars to me, for a few minutes' drive. On inquiry I discovered that forty roubles was not excessive at all, because the value of my fifty-cent roubles was about three cents

or less. I also learned the wretched droshky driver had to earn at least one hundred roubles a day in order to feed his horse! Evidently there were roubles and roubles! I now began to understand why Intourist was willing and even anxious to pay all our expenses, and how it was that our guide was able to scatter paper roubles about as if they were pennies.

However we decided to walk to the hotel, only to find it shut!

The doorkeeper was still on duty and he informed us that the dining room had been specially opened for the visit of the *Kungsholm* cruisers.

Thus we discovered that the orchestra, palm trees, smart waiters and tables reserved for workers had been merely a show put on for our special benefit.

By this time we were really beginning to get hungry, and since there was no such thing as an American Consul to appeal to I decided to call up the British Embassy!

An Englishman who had lived in Moscow for over twenty years answered the telephone.

"How the devil do you get food in this place?" I asked.

"You don't mean to say you're hungry!" he replied with a laugh. "Tell me where you are and I'll come and show you."



Within five minutes a car drove up with a Union Jack flying from the radiator cap, and out stepped the Englishman.

Having explained our predicament to him he said:

"Hop in and I'll take you to the place where the Y.M.C.A. eat!"

"Y.M.C.A.!" I said in astonishment. "I didn't know they had a branch in Moscow."

"That's what we call the Communist Party," he explained with a grin.

After a short drive we arrived at a restaurant whose doorman almost bowed to the ground as he greeted us.

Walking ahead, our English friend led us into a lovely dining room that might easily have been in the St. Regis Hotel, New York.

At one end of the room was an orchestra, and around a small dancing floor were numbers of tables, each fitted with a shaded electric light. At the tables were groups of men and women, rather shabbily dressed but laughing, eating, drinking and dancing like thoroughbred capitalists. "Members of the Party?" I whispered. "Of course!" answered our British benefactor. "Who else *could* be eating such food in Russia?" Just then a waiter hurried up, bowed obsequiously and addressed himself to the Englishman:

"Tovarish!" (It should be noted that the expres-

sions "sir" and "madam" as a mode of address have totally disappeared from speech in Russia. "Tovarish," which means "comrade," is the customary substitute.)

Our friend's reaction to the waiter's "tovarish" was amusing and instructive. He seemed to explode in Russian so effectively that the waiter rushed off and in a few minutes returned with a tray full of the finest food anyone could wish for. Caviar, roast chicken, salad, several kinds of vegetables and a bottle of vodka.

"For heaven's sake tell me what you said to him," I asked the Englishman.

"I called him a son-of-a-bitch for daring to call me his 'tavarish,' but to get a move on and bring us some good food!"

He then explained to us that it doesn't pay to be polite in Russia; politeness is bourgeois and as such is anathema to any Communist.

By this time our breakfast had become "brunch," and as I had an appointment with the manager of Intourist after lunch we said good-bye to our benefactor and returned to the Intourist office. Completely forgetting his advice, I took off my hat as I entered the office and politely asked if the manager could see me.

"You'll have to wait," said the hostess, and I immediately thought of the National Broadcasting

Company in New York and that famous play, *Once in a Lifetime*.

After waiting for over an hour, I got fed up and telephoned the British Embassy again.

"Trouble again?" inquired our new friend genially.

"Can you help me to see the manager of the Intourist?" I begged. "I've given up hope of seeing him and we're supposed to leave Moscow tonight and so far we have no tickets."

What a blessing British government officials are to foreigners! Time seems no object to them, because again the car with the Union Jack arrived. Entering the waiting room, the Englishman exclaimed, "Which door do you wish to enter?"

"That one over there," I answered, indicating the door behind which was the Soviet Lord High Admiral of Intourist. Without ceremony, our friend flung open the door with a bang and ushered us into the royal presence.

"I suppose you have come for your tickets, Mr. Wells," exclaimed the manager without showing the least surprise at our sudden entry. Whereupon he handed me a typewritten sheet that looked like the time-table of a Chautauqua tour, outlining a two weeks' tour with an option of extension, to see the Five-Year Plan.

We were to see collectivized farms, mines, dams,

tractor factories and all kinds of interesting things, most of which I had already seen in the movies at the Cameo Theater in New York.

"But I told you I wanted to go to Mount Ararat!" I complained. "I haven't the least desire to see the Five-Year Plan in operation."

"I'm sorry, but we cannot sell you transportation to Turkey; it is necessary to buy one of our regular tours and the one I have mapped out is one of the most interesting. It will cost you thirty dollars a day for three people."

By this time I began to get angry.

"That's all I want to know," I said. "So it *is* true that travel in Russia is *not* open to anyone but Intourist travelers."

I then began to tell him that I would have the greatest pleasure in leaving Russia by the next train and returning to America, where I would broadcast the news to the world, that only "conducted" tourists were permitted in Russia. Just then I had a happy thought. In my pocket was what explorers call a "dago-dazzler" which had been given me by the Geographic Society of Chicago. "Dago-dazzlers" come in useful when dealing with uncivilized people. Mine was simply a letter of introduction written on the Geographic Society's most impressive paper, with a large golden seal at the bottom. It was addressed:

"To the U.S.S.R. or Whom it may Concern."

Presenting my credentials, I explained that evidently he did not appreciate the fact that I was on an important scientific expedition to Mount Ararat and the Caucasus Mountains; that I was interested only in ethnology and geography and that I was already booked to give a scientific lecture before the Chicago Geographic Society upon my return to America.

After reading the letter, our Intourist friend called someone on the telephone and after a violent argument he turned to me and said:

"Very well! You may travel anywhere you wish without any restriction, provided you obey the law about taking photographs of railways, bridges, military encampments or government buildings. But I must warn you that this journey you propose to make, into the heart of the Caucasus Mountains, is off the beaten track, and for your own safety it will be necessary to send someone with you!"

"That's absolutely all right with me," I replied, "but please make her pretty!"

I knew already that no one can travel in Russia without being escorted by a guide who is usually a girl, and as I expected to be gone for more than a month, I really did hope that the guide assigned to "protect" me would be a pleasant traveling companion.

Snatching back the itinerary which had probably taken the poor man all day to arrange, he threw it into the waste-paper basket and informed us that our train for Southern Russia would leave at midnight, the next day.

"You had better hurry over to the Turkish Consulate and have your passports visaed for entrance into Turkey," he called as we left the office.

Off we dashed to the Turks, and secured the necessary visas without the slightest difficulty. In fact, I was very much impressed with the courtesy and prompt attention shown us by the Turkish Consul.

Why we could not have left at midnight that same night was not explained, but the day's delay of course meant an extra thirty dollars to Intourist!

Dinner that night was a miserable affair, so we retired to our room and made ourselves a pot of tea on a Primus stove and filled up on Swedish bread and sausage.

The next morning we received an invitation to luncheon at the British Embassy! Evidently the news had spread that there were some hungry Americans at the hotel, and the Ambassador must have taken pity on me.

When I informed the hotel manager that I was having lunch with the British Ambassador, he promised to secure a Lincoln car! And sure enough

at midday one arrived. It was one thing to be invited to the Embassy but quite another to get inside the grounds. Nothing that I could do would persuade the Russian sentry at the gate to allow us to enter. In desperation I showed him my membership card in the Explorers Club; then I tried the Circumnavigators Club card; then the blue card of the Royal Geographic Society and finally the "Dago-dazzler," but there was nothing doing. That stolid sentry absolutely refused to let us pass. In desperation I handed him my last card! It was the most impressive one I had; the card of the Circus Saints and Sinners of New York, which happens to be bright red.

The moment he saw the red card, he saluted and allowed us to enter the Embassy grounds. Nothing can describe the effect that this comic red card had upon that soldier of the Red Army. Although I did not know it at the time, I found out that there are only a few such red cards in Russia, and that one of them belongs to Stalin himself, and that only the very highest Communist officials carry them!

Sir Esmond Ovey, the British Ambassador, is one of the most charming English gentlemen I ever met and seemed much too gentlemanly to suit the present régime.

Luncheon was served in a gorgeously decorated

room with a huge oil painting of the King on the wall behind the Ambassador's seat.

The plates, glassware, knives, spoons and forks were of the finest quality; a lovely bowl of flowers was in the center of the table. Two servants waited upon us and we had for luncheon — bacon and eggs!

Guessing what must have been passing through my mind, Sir Esmond explained that bacon and eggs were quite a luxury, and I gathered that the British Ambassador lived principally on canned food that was imported from England, and that even the supply of that was limited.

"Have you ever met Stalin?" I asked.

"I've only seen him at the theater," he replied.

It seemed strange that the British Ambassador should have been in Moscow for about two years without being invited to meet the Man of Steel, but it didn't seem to bother the Ambassador very much.

"I spend a great deal of my time telling Americans who have been deprived of their passports that I can do nothing for them!" volunteered Sir Esmond Ovey. If ever there was a straight peg in a crooked hole, it was this cultured English aristocrat in Communist Moscow.

Hearing that I was on my way to Ararat, he arranged with his secretary to supply me with an ex-



cellent map of the Caucasus and Northern Turkey.

As we left the Embassy that afternoon, after enjoying a real English afternoon tea, including white bread and butter with strawberry jam, we were presented with two cans of Nestle's Sweet Condensed Milk.

"Hang on to them until you're actually ill!" we were advised. "You'll have a pretty thin time in the Northern Caucasus." The advice proved to be painfully correct.

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## *Chapter Six*

### OFF TO THE CAUCASUS BY TRAIN

AT ELEVEN-THIRTY that night, a truck and a Lincoln car supplied by Intourist took us and our baggage to the station. On the way we saw sights that none of us had noticed during the daytime. The crowds of brief case carriers had disappeared. Gone were the workers who were enjoying their day off, but the streets, especially in the vicinity of the railroad tracks, were crowded with people who apparently came out only at night.

At first I thought they were just beggars or loafers who were preparing to spend the night in the streets, but on closer inspection I saw that they were not just beggars — they were starving beggars. Men, women and children, some of them so weak that their friends were helping them along while they groped in the gutters and among piles of garbage for food. If there had been only a few,

I should have thought they were the usual riffraff of humanity that often hang around railroad yards in many big cities, but there were hundreds of them. One look into their faces told the story of starvation. Women with tiny stunted babies in their arms were wandering about aimlessly while their menfolk searched for anything eatable.

(I asked our chauffeur who they were and he said carelessly: "They are bad people; they won't work, they are being liquidated!" Moscow was said to have at least twenty thousand of these "bad people" who were being liquidated by starvation.

Communists distinguish between the unemployed and those who are being "liquidated." When a person is executed in Russia they say that he has been liquidated. If a factory is not turning out its proper quota of goods in accordance with the Five-Year Plan, there must be some difficulty in the factory that requires "liquidation." Frequently the manager of the factory is blamed and he himself is liquidated. Several people in a factory that made galoshes were liquidated while I was in Russia because the factory had sent a carload of galoshes to a certain town, and when the consignment was opened it was found that all the galoshes were for the left foot!

There is only one employer of labor in Russia, and that is the Government. Here in America, if a

man doesn't want to work for Henry Ford he can throw up his job without giving any reason and go to work for General Motors, but woe betide the Russian worker who quits his job without some good reason that is accepted by the Soviet Government: he is immediately deprived of his meal ticket, and that means that he is ultimately liquidated by being starved to death. Disagreement with one's employer is only one of many reasons for losing a meal ticket in Russia.

What it was that had resulted in these wretched people around the railroad station being liquidated, I cannot say, but the sight of so many human beings of all ages obviously dying of starvation was heart-rending. It was nothing, however, to the terrible scenes of mass starvation that we were to witness in the North Caucasus.

The trains in Russia evidently are well patronized, because there was a crowd of at least a thousand people struggling like maniacs to enter the door to the station.

I do not remember once seeing a passenger carrying a suitcase, but everyone had some kind of a bundle or basket. The door through which the people were trying to squeeze was probably six feet wide, but the whole crowd was attempting to get through that door at once. Men were shouting, women screaming and children crying. I saw one

huge fellow throw his heavy bundle over the heads of the others in the direction of the door and then fight like a wild animal to reach his baggage; just a forward pass!

It was certainly a relief to find that we were not expected to join this mob, but were permitted to enter a side door that was well guarded by soldiers.

It was exactly midnight when we finally found ourselves inside the station in the midst of a swirling mass of people. The five o'clock rush in the subway station at Times Square is a peaceful scene compared with the inside of this Moscow station. The platforms were so crowded that people were falling on the tracks, only to be hauled back by their friends. The only similar scene I could conjure up would have been in China when such a crowd of refugees might have stormed a station, knowing that an army of Japanese was on their heels.

In the midst of the uproar a train slowly steamed into the station, and long before it came to rest it was simply packed. Inside, outside, between the carriages, on the roof, and on the springs underneath the carriages, people instantly swarmed, and by the time the train stopped there wasn't room for a single extra passenger; yet the platforms seemed just as packed as ever.

The compartments in the "Hard" class were made to contain about ten people, but each one now contained about thirty. The people were wedged together like sardines with their bundles toppling about over their heads. For a journey that was to last several days, such crowding was obviously unbearable even by the proletariat. Here was a problem that needed to be "liquidated" by drastic methods. The solution evidently occurred to practically everyone simultaneously, because suddenly the ten strongest people in each compartment chucked the other twenty out of the windows, baggage and all.

I saw one woman come flying head first through a window and crash to the platform on her face. No one took the slightest notice of her as with bleeding knuckles and a scratched face, having gathered herself and her belongings together, she slowly walked out of the station to wait for another attempt the following night.

In the midst of a crowd of passengers, who did nothing but look on with callous interest, I saw an old cripple who had tried to board the train with crutches, and had lost them in the struggle. His mouth and hands were bleeding and he was sitting there on the platform shaking his fist at some people who had probably pushed him out of the window. No one helped him to rise and he was still

sitting on the ground as the train pulled out of the station.

Russians are blessed, or cursed, with amazing patience or stolidity or just plain stupidity or all three. No people on earth that I have ever encountered would put up with the terrible treatment handed out to them by officials from the highest to the lowest. It may be that if they could, they would take things into their own hands and rectify matters, but at present it looks as if the great mass of Russian people know by bitter experience that they are helpless.

Resistance to the Government is inevitably punished with brutal severity. We frequently saw high officials walking through railroad stations, and on several occasions we traveled on the same train with distinguished members of the Party, but in every case these great men had bodyguards of at least two and often seven or or eight soldiers or members of the G. P. U. armed with revolvers, which were always conspicuously displayed.

Thanks to Intourist, we had been provided with a reserved compartment, which we had no difficulty in finding since it was guarded by two soldiers with fixed bayonets who spent their time pushing off undesirable passengers.

On reaching the carriage, we found a four-berth sleeping compartment and waiting us was a rather

attractive Russian girl about twenty-two years of age. She was dressed as usual in a one-piece cotton dress, with cotton socks, canvas sneakers and bare legs. Beside her on the seat was a large brown paper package tied up with string and a hunk of black bread carried loose. One of the advantages of black bread is that it doesn't show the dirt.

As I entered the carriage she exclaimed:

"I am to attach myself to you!"

"How long?" I inquired smilingly.

"I am to go with you to the Caucasus," she answered.

"That's fine! This is my wife," I said. "And here is our camera man, Mr. Sintzenich. We call him 'Snitch' for short."

At the name Sintzenich her face clouded, and I afterward learned that "Snitch," who is an American of English descent, had been marked down as a Polish spy! If there is anyone the Russians hate and fear more than an Englishman, it is a Pole. Where "Snitch" got his Polish name I never could find out, but no man could possibly be more English in his speech and manners than our camera man.

For the sake of this Russian girl—I dare not use her right name—whom we soon came to like very much, and in any case, for the information of the G. P. U. and Intourist, I will state here that during our stay in Russia we came into contact with at least



seven Intourist Girl Guides and about twenty Intourist Men Guides, and the experiences we had with all of them are purposely mixed up as to time and place so that, unless they arrest all the guides with whom we were associated and liquidate the lot, the G. P. U. cannot possibly get the goods on "Olga," because Olga in this book is quite fictitious, although our experiences with the various guides are absolutely true.

"Where are we going to sleep?" I asked Olga as I surveyed the four berths.

"I shall sleep down here," indicating one of the lower berths, "and Mrs. Wells down there," indicating the other lower, "and you two men can use the two upper berths," she said as she promptly began to undress. There are no curtains in these Russian trains, so we all had an interesting time undressing together, and by the end of three weeks we all knew to the minutest detail the complete wardrobe of each.

It must be explained that, although Russia has no class distinction, there are three and sometimes four classes on trains. The usual three classes are called, respectively, "International," "Soft," and "Hard." The fourth class looks like a cattle truck, but I didn't learn its name.

"International" is the class generally used by wealthy tourists, visiting celebrities like Bernard

Shaw and Senator Borah perhaps, and high officials of the Communist Party. International carriages have only two sleeping berths but are provided with a private toilet and wash basin. All the International cars I saw were old wagons-lits that must have originally belonged to the Wagon-Lit Company, although today this company does not (or did not when we were in Russia) operate.

"Soft" cars have four berths, but all soft passengers are required to use the one toilet at the end of the carriage. In both International and Soft classes, the carriage is fitted with a corridor that runs along the side of the train.

"Hard" cars are aptly described by their name; they have no kind of upholstery, but they are fitted with four or six plain wooden shelves with a passage down the middle of the carriage. The absence of upholstery in the Hard Class carriages is a great blessing to the passengers, because it means that there is no place for residential bedbugs or lice, but only for the transients who remain with their hosts in preference to the hard benches.

In the midst of the general undressing, an old man appeared on the scene with a large bundle of clean sheets and pillow cases. He was a genial old fellow who understood a few words of French which showed that he had seen better days and was accustomed to wait upon bourgeois people. With the

speed and deftness of a Pullman porter, he made up our four berths and withdrew.

After watching the others go to bed, I undressed, climbed into my upper and turned out the light. The night was hot and clammy, so that we were especially grateful for the sheets and pillow cases which were spotless and newly laundered, but just as I turned over to settle down for the night, there was a crash and out I shot on to the floor of the carriage with all my bedding on top of me.

In a rage I opened the door and shouted to the old attendant, who came hurrying to the carriage, gave one look at the berth and exclaimed, "*Kapoot!*" He was such a decent old fellow that I stopped swearing at him! I couldn't understand what he was saying, but I think it must have been something like this: "Now, don't you worry, sir, because everything will be all right in a minute; I am going to fix it for you."

This is how he fixed it: First he grabbed a pillow, then he lifted up the berth and balanced it on his head while he thrust the pillow as far back as he could into the mechanism of the apparatus. He then proceeded to lift the berth up and down rapidly until the pillow was thoroughly masticated by the cogs and finally he gave the berth a wrench downwards and it stuck beautifully. He then turned to me with a smile and beckoned me to climb up again.

With a bow as much as to say, "I told you I'd fix it for you; now sleep and don't fear another collapse," the old man left the carriage.

It was fixed all right and probably it is still in the same position with the pillow inextricably chewed up in the works, providing a lovely nesting place for innumerable visitors.

Just as I was dozing off, my wife gave a mournful wail. "Turn up the light!"

I shall never forget the sight that met my eyes as I switched on the one electric light. The Russian girl was apparently sound asleep in her berth but my wife was lying on hers, wide awake and pointing to the nice white sheet which now had a perfect polka-dot pattern!

Hundreds of bedbugs were scuttling to cover. There is one of the most intelligent animals in the world. A bedbug never goes out hunting without first having made up its mind exactly where it is going to take refuge the moment anyone turns on the light. Without the slightest hesitation in direction, those bedbugs were scooting off to cover and in a few seconds not one was to be seen.

"Let's try again, turn off the light," my wife suggested.

After remaining in darkness for five minutes, we suddenly switched on the light, and then the slaughter began. The noise of our swatting the in-

vaders awakened Olga, who watched us in astonishment.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Swatting bugs," I replied. "Haven't you got any over there?"

"Of course not," she answered rather angrily, "and in any case they don't bite me!"

I felt like saying that I wouldn't blame a bug for not biting a Communist but I refrained; but she spoke the truth because, while the three of us were continually bitten for the next three weeks, I do not remember seeing a single bite on Olga.

I have noticed that insects in all parts of the world appear to bite the local inhabitants only as a last resort. In the Malay jungle, when I myself was tormented by mosquitoes, they seemed to avoid the Malays. In Connecticut I have noticed that if I work in my garden with bare arms, I get plenty of bites but my gardener claims that insects pay no attention to him. So in Russia, it may be that bed-bugs and body lice prefer the unusual taste of the bourgeois tourist to the flavor of the Red.

The train took at least two hours to get out of the labyrinth of railroad tracks entering Moscow. Although there were plenty of signal boxes, it was apparent that the engine driver had no confidence in the signals because every few minutes he would get down and examine the switches to make sure

that the train would enter the right track and not charge into some waiting freight train.

Sleep was impossible for several hours so I amused myself by standing in the corridor watching the efforts of the train crew to extricate the train from the station yard. It was interesting to see that the freight trains in many cases were loaded with pig iron. Every now and then we would see a group of ragged people huddled around a fire alongside the tracks cooking a meal of muck recovered from some refuse heap. Children would be sleeping on the ground while the mother tended the fire and father unwrapped the rags that bound up his feet and examined his sores! Each time the train came to a stop, a gang of mechanics in blue overalls would examine the bearings of the train, many of which were already *kapoot*, and pour a liberal supply of oil into the smoking axle-boxes.

About three o'clock in the morning we reached open country, and as I turned to reënter my compartment, our old friend the attendant beckoned to me. He was sitting on a stool at the end of the corridor in front of a large samovar which he was stoking up with chips of wood. It was the first time I had seen how a samovar worked and in no time the water was boiling and ready for tea. Being accustomed to making tea myself, I watched him with interest as he first warmed the

tea-pot and then having placed a small pinch of dusty tea inside, filled it with boiling water.

He then gave me a glass of the same straw-colored liquid which we had been given in the New Moscow Hotel. Tea was evidently extremely precious. After finishing the tea, he opened the door of the toilet and placed his small package of tea in a cupboard evidently used by him as a larder though its original purpose was for the storing of brushes and cloths for keeping the toilet tidy.

After a most uncomfortable night, having watched Olga get up and dress first, I dressed myself and said:

"How about some breakfast? Let's go to the dining car."

Olga looked at me as if I were mad and then exclaimed nervously:

"I do not understand! Do you not have any food with you?"

"Food!" I shouted. "Isn't there a dining car on this train?"

"No, no, Mr. Wells; they should have told you that there is no such thing. There are very few dining cars in Russia and the one that should have been attached to this train broke down in Moscow!"

"*Kapoot* I suppose!" I said sarcastically.

Olga began to look tearful as she said: "You should not mock my country. It is not my fault.

We shall be on this train four days and all the food I brought is some caviar and a piece of bread, which I intended for myself, but you shall share it until we get to a station and then I will try to get food for you!"

Thank God I had brought that Swedish sausage, hard bread and the pound of tea! Not only that, but I had expected something like this would happen, so I had taken the precaution to bring with me a small teapot, a large thermos flask, a Primus stove, and a box of solid "Meta" fuel.

A Primus stove and "Meta" fuel had probably saved my life while climbing Ruwenzori in Central Africa, but I never dreamed what a blessing this simple camping outfit would prove to be on a train in the land of the Great Experiment.

Olga watched me apprehensively as I produced the Primus stove. "Oh! no! no! no!—you mustn't. It is forbidden to use such a stove on a train; the oil is too dangerous!"

"Don't worry, my dear! I use magic fuel," I said as I unpacked the little white tablets of solid fuel and ignited it.

Within ten minutes I had a kettle of boiling water, but before making some tea I sent for the old attendant. When he saw the Primus stove and the boiling water he at once began to object to my using dangerous kerosene, but when I showed him that the



stove was empty and that it had apparently never been used, he looked amazed.

Taking the tea, I then placed in the pot one spoonful of leaves for each person and an extra one for the pot, poured on the boiling water and served tea that looked like tea! Both Olga and the attendant drank a glass and smacked their lips afterwards. The old man could probably remember the old days when tea was just as cheap in Russia as it is in America, but Olga was too young, and she admitted that she had never seen tea that color before. The attendant begged me for the tea leaves, which he dried in the sun and added to his own precious packet in the toilet!

Olga then gave us each a piece of her own black bread, and untied her paper bundle. I expected to see an assortment of food such as we might have taken with us on a train journey, had we known that there would be no diner, but not at all! The package contained an old copy of the *Moscow Daily News* in which was wrapped about five pounds of caviar.

Spread thinly on a small piece of toast and served with cocktails, caviar isn't at all bad, but I defy anyone to enjoy caviar after it has been wrapped up in an old newspaper, thrown about, sat on several times, warmed up by a day's journey in a hot railroad carriage and then thoroughly

mixed with printer's ink. All the little round eggs had been crushed so that the contents looked like a large mess of black slime.

After offering us each a portion and meeting with refusal, Olga settled down to devour about a pound of the filthy fish food spread on bread of the same color.

We ourselves had one minute piece of sausage cut as thin as a razor blade would cut it, washed down by the most heavenly tea I ever tasted. For cups we used a set of birch-wood cups that I had used in Lapland.

After breakfast I unpacked some of the attractive Intourist literature by means of which unsuspecting people are enticed to Russia, and pointed out to Olga what we were supposed to get for our money.

Printed in large black type was this announcement:

**\$10.00 A DAY NOW PROVIDES IMPROVED  
ACCOMMODATIONS.  
AN ALL-INCLUSIVE SERVICE IN WHICH  
THERE ARE NO EXTRAS!**

**\$10.00 A DAY PROVIDES: FIRST CLASS HOTELS; TRAINS AND  
SLEEPERS. ALL MEALS ARE INCLUDED WHETHER ON  
TRAINS, ON STEAMERS OR IN HOTELS. AFTERNOON TEA  
IS ALSO PROVIDED IN HOTELS.**

*Special Notice*

The dining cars on all trains in the Soviet Union have been placed under the control of INTOURIST. The entire catering system of the dining car service has been completely overhauled and reorganized, the menus have been changed to meet the requirements of the foreign visitors. The scale of prices which at times have been rather high have been brought within a comparatively moderate range. Three meals a day with afternoon tea are provided for \$3.30 per day. A less pretentious menu is offered at \$2.50, also including afternoon tea.

"But where ever did you get such a paper?" asked Olga. "It is such nonsense! It must be all a mistake!"

Yet she would not hear a word against Intourist, but insisted that I must have been swindled in America! This was precisely what had happened to me and probably to hundreds of others who have been misled by the clever advertising of the various Intourist agencies in America.

"Tell me, Olga, have you yourself ever seen a dining car on a Russian train?" I inquired gently.

"Of course I have," she replied; "but it is not right for this paper to make people think we have many dining cars. Only a few of our best trains have them."

"Well," I said, "what do we get for our thirty dollars a day?"

With unswervable loyalty to Intourist, Olga prom-

ised that she would provide us with food on the entire trip and pay for it too. The only trouble was that what Olga considered food was not our idea of it at all and she, being accustomed to eating rotten eggs and cucumbers by the dozen, could not understand our turning up our noses at the provisions she purchased. I may say here that we turned up our noses only at first, but when we slowly but surely began to starve we ate food that we wouldn't have given a dog in America—and were glad to get it.

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## *Chapter Seven*

### MARRIAGE AND MORALS AMONG COMMUNISTS

ABOUT nine-thirty that morning we pulled up at a small town, but long before the train came to a standstill the passengers began jumping off and racing like mad down the platform.

Why many of them were not killed is beyond my comprehension, because I watched people crawl from beneath the moving carriages and take flying leaps to the ground where they joined the racing crowd.

Evidently there was some attraction that everyone was most eager to see. As they passed our carriage I noticed that each person was carrying some kind of receptacle. Some had teapots, some had saucepans, but most of the people had only empty bottles or old cans.

We had already discovered that water was worth its weight in paper roubles on this train. The old

attendant's samovar was empty and there hadn't been a drop of water for washing purposes since we left Moscow.

Olga seized our kettle, Snitch took our saucepan, Zetta (my wife) carried the teapot, and I took our large thermos flask. We then joined the crowd and kept on going for about five minutes until we found ourselves in a field. In the middle of the field, surrounded by long grass that reached almost to the top of the wheels, was a large traction engine.

Apparently the engine was complete in every detail, but it was covered with rust and was evidently *kapoot*. In all probability it had originally been a very good engine but whoever had used it had forgotten to lubricate the cylinders, which had jammed. Having no further use for it as a traction engine, the owner had punched a hole in the boiler into which he had fitted a large tap, and he was now using the engine for boiling water for passengers on passing trains. With their usual patience, the people were lined up, in a long queue, waiting to have their receptacles filled with the precious liquid, but I was positive that not a single drop would be wasted on washing, unless we ourselves were lucky enough to fill all our vessels.

Finally my turn came, and I handed the dispenser of water my thermos flask. Evidently this was something new. From the gingerly way he handled it,

I think the man must have suspected it of being a bomb, so to give him confidence, I pointed to the hole and then to the tap. Before filling it, however, he wrapped around it an old sack and then having filled the flask he quickly handed it to me, sack and all.

When I threw away the sack and held the flask in my bare hands, the Russian's eyes simply popped out of his head. Stretching out his hand he felt the flask with the tip of his finger, then he stroked it, then with a glance for permission, he took the flask away from me and was soon surrounded by people, who took it in turns to hold the flask and blow the steam from the neck, to convince the on-lookers that it really contained boiling water.

Meanwhile, Olga, after searching everywhere, had succeeded in buying a few small cucumbers and a large slab of black bread.

Just as I reached the train with the hot water, I saw a woman walking down the platform, offering something for sale at each train window as she passed by. People shook their heads, as it was evidently a luxury too expensive for most people. The woman soon reached our carriage and then I had an opportunity of looking at her closely.

She was about fifty years old, dressed in the filthiest rags, with bare feet and covered all over with dust and grime. Over her head she wore an

old ragged cloth, the color of which had originally been white but was now dark brown.

In her hand she was holding a small roasted chicken! The only way you could tell it was a chicken was from the shape; the carcass was as black as ink. Probably this chicken had died from natural causes and, rather than waste it, the owner had decided to roast it and try to sell it to some passenger on a passing train.

Every time a train stopped, she had made a round of the carriages and each time, of course, the chicken had accumulated a fresh layer of coal dust. After examining the dainty morsel I said to Zetta, "Perhaps we can peel it!"

That chicken cost sixteen roubles (eight dollars in real money), and having purchased it, I proceeded to peel it! To refresh my memory I have just consulted my wife's diary, and this is her entry concerning the chicken:

"Carveth is peeling the chicken and the air is filled with the foul smell of rotten meat. He has soon discovered his mistake and has thrown the chicken out the window."

The train was still in the station when the chicken fell with a plop on the platform, but it hadn't been there more than a second before a little boy, about seven years old and dressed in nothing but a man's coat, seized it. He was off with it like a streak but



not fast enough, because a bigger boy, who was wearing nothing but an old shirt, caught him and gave the kid a punch in the nose, snatched the chicken and made off with it.

He in turn was caught by a man who gave him a kick in the place his pants ought to have been and dashed off into the bushes followed by a crowd of ragged boys. The whole incident made me think of a farmyard and a chase when some fowl, having found a tasty morsel, dashed away with it followed by the rest of the chickens.

We were now one day south of Moscow and the weather was becoming hotter and hotter and the carriages dustier and dustier. Our old attendant had filled a can with water which he now began to sprinkle along the corridor and on the floors of the compartments, with most unfortunate results.

The stink of the train was bad enough when it was dry, but this liberal sprinkling evidently dissolved the accumulation of urea crystals, which are highly soluble in water, and the heat promptly evaporated the water and released volumes of fumes that made me think of my old college days when I first learned the origin of ammonia. I remember remarking to Snitch that I'd far rather travel with a trainload of camels than a company of Communists. Only one of the dozen or more windows would open, the rest being *kapoot*, so

the atmosphere could have been cut with a knife.

The water we had secured from the traction engine was as cloudy as the Mississippi, but after an hour it settled and left about a quarter of an inch of sediment. With this water we again made tea and had a competition to see who could make the best collection of specimens from a slice of the newly purchased bread, which proved to be of far better quality than that served in Moscow, for with the exception of a few pieces of straw the bread was free from refuse.

Three hours later the train again stopped at a small station, and to my astonishment the same little boy wearing the old coat climbed up the side of the carriage, popped his head in at the window and begged for another chicken! On looking over the people on the platform I immediately spotted at least a dozen other children whom I had recognized during the chicken chase at the previous station.

They had been riding on the rods of course! The small boy had evidently told his companions that we were easy marks for food, because they all crowded around, holding out their hands for food.

At first glance they might easily have been mistaken for blackamoors because they were covered from head to foot with coal and oil, but their features showed them to be Russians.

"Who are these children?" I asked Olga.

"They are the orphans from the Revolution," she replied.

"But, my dear, the Revolution took place about fifteen years ago and these kids cannot be more than eight or nine years old!" I objected.

Olga had no reply. As a matter of fact, these ragged youngsters were just a sample of the thousands of so-called "fatherless children" who roam the country like wild animals. The real orphans do exist; we saw hundreds of them, but they were young men and women whose story has been advertised all over the world in a motion picture entitled *The Road to Life*.

These small children who accompanied us for days on the train probably had never heard of the Revolution, but were simply products of unrestricted breeding, who had never known their fathers but had been abandoned by their mothers as soon as they could fend for themselves. In many cases it is quite possible that they were genuine orphans whose parents had been liquidated by the State. Among them were plenty of girls, but as they all dress in rags and preferably the rags of men's clothes, it was difficult for us to tell the girls from the boys.

During the summer months they ride all over the country on the trains and their approach to towns is dreaded by the inhabitants as if they were

a swarm of locusts. By careful watching I noticed that when we approached a large town, about thirty of these youngsters would jump off the train before it entered the station and scuttle off into the woods. There they would remain in hiding until the train started again, but as soon as it reached the yard limits, they would suddenly reappear ahead of the train and jump on board while the engine driver purposely opened the throttle, and local people showered them with bricks to knock them off the train. Most of the towns we stopped at were small, however, and in this case the children boldly rode into the station and begged from the passengers.

I saw a gang of three attack an old peasant woman who was selling cucumbers. For a few moments they surrounded her and teased her until she became angry and chased one of them. Then a big boy tripped her up and she fell flat on her face, scattering her precious cucumbers everywhere. By the time she had pulled herself together, the cucumbers had disappeared.

As these children grow up, and of course only the fittest can possibly survive more than a few years, they either are "rescued" by the Government or they become bandits of the worst description.

Illegitimacy is no disgrace in Russia. This is undoubtedly just and other countries would do well to follow her example, but certainly not allow these natural children to run wild and become a menace

to others. The Russians are undertaking a good work with their baby farms and crèches, but how long will it take to collect and care for all the illegitimate and other homeless children in a country of one hundred and sixty million people?

As the train rolled along, I took this opportunity to discuss with Olga her views on marriage and divorce.

She herself didn't believe in marriage at all and said that she would live with a man if she liked him and leave him when she got tired of him.

"But suppose you had a baby?" I inquired.

"In the first place, I wouldn't have one unless I was absolutely sure that my husband wanted it as much as I did and even then I wouldn't think of trying to raise a baby! What do I know about children? It would be far more sensible to hand it over to the State and let it be reared by specialists," was her answer.

"But suppose you fell in love with a man; wouldn't you want to have a baby and look after him and have a nice little home of your own!"

Olga gave me a look as if I were to be pitied for my ignorance. "Love is a bourgeois sentiment fostered by the Church. Home is another trick of the Church to control people and make them want to meet again after they die," she almost shouted.

"So you don't believe in immortality?" I queried.

"Rubbish! Just another Church swindle. When we are dead, we are dead, finished, just the same as any other animal. We young Communists have too much sense to believe in such nonsense as God, Heaven and Hell."

I then asked her to tell me what exactly were the customs with regard to marriage for those who wished. As far as I could make out, marriage is merely a matter of registering the fact that you are living together. I may be wrong but I understood her to say that either party may register the marriage, and that one party might even register without the knowledge of the other. This often leads to complications because a man might be living with a girl without any intention of marrying her, but she can register the fact that they are living together. Then should there be a baby, the girl can collect not more than one-third of her husband's wages for support.

Divorce is just as simple as marriage. You can be married after breakfast, divorced after lunch and remarried after dinner, so far as I could make out from Olga, but no matter how many times a man marries or how many children he may have in various parts of the country, he can never be compelled to part with more than a third of his wages.

Communists are very keen on the absolute equality and freedom of both men and women in

sexual matters, but they sneer at bourgeois ideas of Mother, Home and Heaven.

After a spirited argument with her, I got Olga to admit that eventually, if Communism succeeded, there would be regular stud farms run by the Government for the raising of babies for the State.

No one would have "love" children, but birth control would be rigidly enforced. By the means already employed for raising pure-blooded stock, such as Jersey cows, Holsteins, Angora rabbits, race horses and cart horses, fighting cocks and ordinary White Leghorn roosters, so would the State raise the various kind of babies it required.

Such an arrangement would indeed be interesting. Special sires would be selected for the production of soldiers, sailors, statesmen, engineers, authors and bishops! It makes me think of that old "chestnut" told of Bernard Shaw and Isadora Duncan. Isadora remarked to Shaw what a wonderful child should result from such a union as theirs, a baby with Shaw's brain and Isadora's figure. But Shaw replied that it might not be so wonderful if the baby had his figure and Isadora's brain.

There is no doubt that Russia has many people who have advanced ideas. She undoubtedly has her great scientists, artists, actors and other intellectuals. She had them long before the days of Lenin

and Stalin, but only a very small percentage compared with her immense population. This percentage is even smaller now, because during the Revolution practically all her great men and women were either killed or scattered to the far corners of the world, much to the world's advantage and Russia's irreparable loss.

Our conversation with Olga became more and more interesting as we became acquainted, but it was plain to see that her utter contempt for us as bourgeois nincompoops, grew with our familiarity.

At first she suspected that I was a British, Zetta an American and Snitch a Polish spy, but after a few days she became convinced that Zetta and I were just a couple of crazy aristocrats. As for "Snitch," he was undoubtedly a Pole, and as future events showed, she must have reported him as a Pole to the Russian Government.

Before leaving America I had purchased ten dollars' worth of Woolworth's most spectacular products. I had safety razors, scissors, lipsticks, mirrors, sets of fancy buttons and a great assortment of cheap jewelry. All of it was intended for use in securing motion pictures of certain primitive tribes in the Caucasus Mountains.

Just for the fun of it, I opened this suitcase and showed the contents to Olga. Her surprise and delight were well worth the ten dollars. Showing her a



Gillette razor that was gold plated and fitted with one blade, I asked her how much such a razor was worth in Russia. "But you cannot buy such a thing!" she said. "It would be very expensive, perhaps several hundred roubles!"

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "Why, we give such things away in America!"

But just to clinch the matter I called the old attendant, who looked as if he had never had a shave in his life. Handing him the razor, I said: "Here! take this; I haven't room for it in my baggage." And for still greater effect I fished out two more razors and told him to get rid of them.

Olga looked at me in amazement. By this time the news had spread that there was a crazy aristocrat giving razors away, and a crowd of dreadful-looking people began to scuffle around the door of our compartment.

Among my treasures were about a dozen bundles of small gold-plated safety pins at five cents a bunch, so I threw several bunches into the crowd. They were eagerly snatched up, and I must say this for those Communists, they promptly divided the bunches up, giving each person one or two safety pins.

When I looked at Olga, she had tears in her eyes.

"Why do you always mock my country? I do

not believe that these things are so valueless in America," she cried.

By this time I was unkindly rubbing it in, but I couldn't resist telling the poor girl that her complete wardrobe wouldn't have cost fifty cents in America. I did not mean to insult her for having poor clothes but I wanted to give her an idea of what one could buy at Woolworth's for five or ten cents. Olga misunderstood.

"I am proud to be in rags! I am proud to eat poor food! I am only one of millions of Russians who are living like this for the sake of our country! We love luxuries as much as you Americans do, and when the Five-Year Plan is over we shall have better things than you have. We too shall have our silk stockings and fine clothes and fruit to eat, but now we are sacrificing ourselves so that we can save money and buy your American machinery!"

With that she dashed out of the carriage. A few minutes later I noticed her sitting in another carriage, writing rapidly in a notebook. It may have been just her private diary, but I strongly suspect that it was her daily report to Intourist and the G. P. U. of the conversations she had with me, and of my counter-revolutionary activities in scattering safety pins to the proletariat.

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## *Chapter Eight*

### LIQUIDATING THE KULAKS

**I**T WAS now two days since we had eaten enough food to satisfy our healthy appetites, and since there was no knowing what was ahead of us, we decided to call a council of war and measure the exact length of that Swedish sausage. On unpacking the basket which had been given to us more for a joke than anything else, we found that we had nearly a full pound of tea, fourteen pieces of Swedish bread, about one pound of granulated sugar besides a few lumps of sugar that we had removed from the table at the New Moscow Hotel, and the two cans of sweet condensed milk. The sausage measured exactly eight inches in length and three inches in diameter! From the careful way we worked out rations for three people, for three weeks, we might have been mistaken for arctic explorers preparing for a dash to the North Pole.

By a great stroke of luck we managed to buy half a dozen hard-boiled eggs, most of which turned out to be fit to eat, although when eating them we had to banish from our minds the appearance of the people from whom we bought them. (It is a strange sight to see a peasant woman hurrying from one end of a station platform to the other, trying to sell one egg! Later on we were also able to buy several tomatoes for three roubles apiece (\$1.50 in American money), but they were so filthy that we actually washed them thoroughly in disinfectant and then skinned them before daring to eat them. At most of the wayside stops we could have purchased milk in old whisky bottles, but after buying one bottle and discovering several flies and at least an inch of black sediment in the bottle, we decided not to touch it unless we were actually starving to death. So far we were only reducing!)

For anyone who is genuinely anxious to reduce, I recommend a month's uncondacted tour of Soviet Russia. You can confidently count on losing weight at about one pound per day for as long as you can stand it. This is no figure of speech, because I am willing to state on oath that I myself lost twenty-six pounds and my wife sixteen pounds during the few weeks we spent in Russia.

The extraordinary thing was that the farther we penetrated into the Ukraine, which used to be the

"Granary of Russia," the less food there was and the more starvation to be seen on every side. Hour after hour the train passed through country that looked very much like North Dakota or Saskatchewan except that it was covered with weeds as far as the eye could see.

Farm houses were in ruins everywhere, roofs gone, fences broken down, wagons without wheels, farming implements lying about in every stage of *kapootness* while wretched-looking peasants with rags tied around their feet were to be seen wandering about aimlessly and watching the train go by without a smile on their faces. Many of the passengers waved to them, but without response. None of us knew what tragedies had been enacted here as a result of trying to force the people to join collectivized farms and the liquidating of the Kulaks. Once or twice a day we would pass a long freight train that had been shunted into a siding to permit our passage, loaded with so-called Kulaks who were being transported to Siberia, where they would be liquidated by Nature or by the bullet of a taskmaster in a lumber camp.

The sight of these poor people, riding behind the bars of cattle trucks was pitiful. Here in the United States it is not permitted to transport even sheep or cattle without regular rests, where the animals are removed from the train, fed, watered and allowed to recuperate. Even though destined for the stock-

yards of Chicago for slaughter, our livestock are humanely treated, and sick animals are placed in special pens and allowed to get well again before continuing their journey to the butcher.

Not so in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus!

Packed like sardines, without any sanitary arrangements whatever and with only the food and water that the people themselves may have thought of bringing, thousands and thousands of helpless human beings have been transported from their homes to the worst districts of Russia's arctic regions. Some idea of the famine, wholesale transportation, revolt and mass slaughter of the people in this part of Russia can be obtained by reference to the *Literary Digest* of January 28, 1933.

We ourselves happened to be passing through the Ukraine and the Caucasus in the very midst of the famine in July, 1932. From the train windows, children could be seen eating grass. The sight of small children with stomachs enormously distended is not at all uncommon in Africa or other tropical countries, but this was the first time I had ever seen white children in such a state.

Although we did not know it, there happened to be in Russia about the same time as we were, two American girls, Miss Alva Christensen and Miss Mary Degive of Atlanta, Georgia. Describing one of the scenes they witnessed, these two young explorers of the Soviet Union state:

"At one table sat five Soviet officials, partaking of expensive liqueurs and chocolate cakes covered with rich cream. This does not coincide with Communists' stories of sacrifice for the sake of the masses. We thought of that little incident many times when we saw the swollen bellied Russian children on all fours eating grass like so many sheep!"

That famine exists in Russia has been repeatedly denied, but the truth will out — even though it takes a long time for Walter Duranty to admit it.

As recently as July 7, 1933, an appeal was made by Professor Richard Sallet of Northwestern University, Chicago, as reported in the New York *World Telegram* of that date, for the relief of the starving people of the Ukraine and North Caucasus. Professor Sallet stated that during the last year at least ten million people had died of starvation in those regions!

Whether or not Duranty was cabled for a report on this famine I cannot say, but perhaps it was merely a coincidence that the issue of the New York *Times* of July 9, 1933, should contain a special cable from him headed:

## RUSSIAN SUFFERING JUSTIFIED BY REDS

He then with great cleverness explains why the Bolsheviks care nothing for the sufferings of the people, and comparing the great loss of life during

the World War with the much greater loss of life since the Russians determined to "liquidate" the Kulaks, he said:

"And after all, those who die here are not the best, bravest and youngest, but the oldest and weakest. It is a cruel argument but the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics is near to cruel Asia, and the Proverb 'One Life one Kopek' was a century old expression of human values in Czarist Russia." He then continues: "That life here today is hard and menaced by malnutrition and diseases that arise therefrom, goes without question, but the Kremlin believes with fanatic fervor that the hardships are worth while."

Walter Duranty hates to use the plain word "famine" or such an ordinary word as "starvation"; he fails to explain that the Kremlin, meaning Stalin and the Y.M.C.A. (Communist Party), live like fighting cocks while millions of offenseless people are not only dying but have actually died from what he calls "malnutrition."

Stalin is determined to "liquidate" the old people, no matter if they amount to millions, and any person who can remember the days of the Czar, and even the knout, is "old." If the Czar chastised his people with whips, then Stalin is chastising them with scorpions. China has the River Hoang-Ho but Russia has Stalin. Both are efficient in destroying



lives by the million, but the river is more merciful. After watching these scenes of desolation for hours and the endless succession of ruined homesteads and country overgrown with weeds, I turned to Olga:

"What is the explanation of this? Isn't the Ukraine supposed to be the Granary of Russia?"

Olga immediately flared up in defense of her country.

"I will tell you about these Kulaks!" she almost screamed. "They have rebelled against the Government ever since nineteen-twenty-three when they were asked to pay a tax on grain. Many of our tax collectors were sent into the Ukraine, but the Kulaks murdered them, disemboweled them, filled their bodies full of grain and sent them on freight trains to Moscow with notes pinned to them saying, 'Here is your grain!'"

"Well," I replied, "even if they did, that was ten years ago and surely the Government could have punished the murderers without systematically 'liquidating' several million people. Tell me exactly what you mean by the word 'kulak'?"

Olga clenched her fist and shook it in my face. "That is a kulak, a fist." She then explained that any peasant who employed other peasants to work for him, was a Kulak. She did not use the word "employ"; she used "exploit." In other words, anyone who by his own ability has reached such a state

of independence that he can afford to employ labor on a farm, is a "Kulak."

"Then as far as I can see, Stalin is the biggest Kulak in Russia." I laughed. "Your boss in Intourist is a Kulak!"

Olga couldn't see the point at all, but she said: "Wait till tomorrow and you will see a collectivized farm! Collectivization is what the peasants need, but until all the Kulaks are dead, we cannot make collectivization succeed."

Just in the midst of the conversation we heard a lot of shouting and laughing, so I popped my head out of the window and saw the cause of the unusual hilarity. A man in the front part of the train had let his teapot fall out of the window, and everyone was shouting to the people at the rear of the train to rescue the precious pot. Sure enough a man near us jumped off the train, picked up the pot and jumped back on the train before the baggage car reached him. This will give some idea of the terrific speed at which we tore through the Ukraine and will explain how I was able to make minute observations from the train window.

As we passed a rather pretty river we saw hundreds of people bathing naked, men, women and children. Personally I think that to bathe naked is the best way and my experience in Scandinavian countries had shown me that nakedness is nothing

to be ashamed of. I merely mention that we frequently saw crowds of naked bathers in Russia to substantiate a fact that is often denied in books on Russia, as if it were a libel on a moral people to say that they have mixed naked bathing.

As the day wore on and we got farther and farther south, I noticed that every bridge we passed was guarded by soldiers, and so were the wells. Then our old train attendant insisted that we close our window, in spite of the heat which was terrific.

"Why?" I complained. His answer was the best bit of pantomime I had seen for a long time. Pointing to the open window, the old man pretended to throw something through it and then he gave a loud "Boooooom!" Apparently the inhabitants of this part of Russia didn't love the passengers in the trains, especially people who looked like high officials, and were in the habit of throwing bombs through the windows.

Here is an extract from Zetta's diary that was written as the various incidents occurred:

*July 26th.* Still on the train. What a night! Again devoured by bedbugs while beetles and lice crawled all over us. To add insult to injury the wretched brake-woman woke us twice during the night by opening our compartment and placing a lighted candle over the door.

Why she should insist on lighting a candle when she sees we have switched off our light, is beyond me. I swore at her the second time but fortunately for her she couldn't understand. Finally I woke Olga and asked her to swear at her in Russian, but she very politely requested her to remove the candle, and Olga is unable to explain why the brake-woman insists on lighting the darned candle every time I blow it out. No more sleep for me. We are due to change trains at 4.50 A.M. Carveth is putting on his clothes, I slept in mine. We are exhausted — hungry — scarcely any sleep — a thousand welts on our bodies from vermin — but our sense of humor enables us to laugh at our ridiculous predicament — the thought of sneaking out on our friends the bedbugs at 4 A.M. makes us giggle. We have arrived at the station. My God! what a sight! I shall never forget it. Poverty, filth, disease and hunger everywhere. Women in rags and tatters are lying about in the dust and dirt half asleep with emaciated little babies sucking at their empty breasts. The people's clothes are actually tied on with bits of string and they look as if they had lived in them for years without taking them off. I can see one poor woman with four small children. The smallest looks about a week old and is nursing

at one breast while another about year old is tugging at the other. Now she has moved the year old baby and is nursing a two year old and pushing the oldest child away. She is nursing all three children while she herself is chewing on a small cucumber. There are pieces of old watermelon rind on the ground about her. I see a little girl who looks about ten years old to judge from her skinny little body but her face looks like that of a woman thirty years old.

She is taking care of a tiny baby whose face is purple with the cold.

Even I am cold at this hour of the morning. I smiled at the child but she didn't smile back; I'm wondering if she has ever learned to smile.

Carveth suggested that we take a walk through the village. We did, but the conditions were even worse. Much to my embarrassment a young man about twenty years of age walked across the street as naked as Adam but covered with dirt through which I could see pink sores.

He stepped over a number of sleeping people and then started to pick up pieces of watermelon rind. Some of the people woke up and drove him off. The naked boy has just run across

the railroad tracks and has climbed underneath one of the coaches.

After seeing this startling sight we continued walking away from the railroad. Several hot-boxes including one on the engine told me that the train would be *kapoot* for at least an hour, so we wandered off following a crowd of peasants who were apparently going to some market.

Olga herself was very interested because as she explained: "The food shortage has been very severe in this part of Russia, so the Government had given permission for some of the Kulak markets to open!"

About a mile from the station we came to a large field that was filled with very rough wooden tables and swarming with people. It was the first market of its kind to open for many months.

"You can now see for yourself," said Olga, "that there is food in the country if only these Kulaks would allow other people to have it!"

But what a market! One man who was surrounded by his family had brought to market the scraggiest runt of a pig I ever saw! Several others had brought very thin chickens; but no one had more than one chicken or one pig for sale. We attempted to buy some of this food but having had to pay \$1.50 for one tomato, the reader can well im-

agine the price of a pig or even a chicken. At any price, we couldn't have cooked it if we had bought it. I saw one man who had a cartful of hay which he was exchanging for milk. I found out that this man's cow had been commandeered for a large collectivized farm; now he had plenty of hay but no cow, so he was buying milk with hay!

The only part of the market where there was any large quantity of anything for sale was the bread market. Great slabs of black bread as big as a grindstone but only about an inch thick, were piled on the bare ground. Noticing that the bread was hot, I made up my mind to see a bakery the first time I had a chance in order to ascertain the origin of the extraordinary collection of junk that somehow or other always found its way into every slice I ate.

One section of the market was devoted entirely to hardware, but compared with this exhibition of hardware, a third-rate junk dealer's store in America was a veritable Marshall Field's. Not a single item was new and none even second hand. There were pieces of old broken hinges, broken springs from ancient clocks, rusty old keys and, most expensive of all, small piles of rusty nails and screws. One man was sitting on the ground guarding three nails that were displayed on a leaf! I saw a woman

similarly sitting in front of a leaf on which reposed one large tomato, her sole stock in trade.

Olga gave a shout of joy when she saw a man selling small green apples about the size of a walnut. He had them threaded on a string and was selling a string of six small apples for three roubles.

"Why on earth don't they allow the apples to grow and ripen?" I asked Olga who was already munching an apple and thoroughly enjoying it.

When she came to the core, I pointed out to her that the pips were white, but she didn't know that apples ever grew rosy and had brown pips when they were ripe. The real reason for picking them before they had even taken proper shape was that if the owner didn't pick them someone else would. No fruit ever gets a chance to ripen properly in a community where everything belongs to everybody!

We had an interesting experience in this primitive market place that showed us plainly that, although religion is supposed to be opium for the people, they are still fond of it.

In the middle of the market were two groups of blind musicians. Both groups had dilapidated portable harmoniums that looked something like accordions, except that they had only about two octaves of ordinary piano keys. One man played the harmonium while the others in the group sang.



In the middle of each group was a large earthenware bowl to receive the alms of passers-by.

One of the groups was evidently popular, since their bowl was filled with small metal coins and an assortment of fruit and vegetables. The bowl of the other group of blind players was absolutely empty although they were surrounded by a crowd of small boys and men who would burst out into loud guffaws every few seconds. These singers were entertaining their audience with ribald songs and blasphemous parodies on the hymns that were being sung by the other group of blind people.

After watching them closely for several minutes I noticed that most of the peasant women, after making a purchase, would walk over to the group singing the hymns and place a contribution in their bowl in which a small cross had been placed. To judge from this market crowd, there must be a great many people in Russia who still believe in God and religion although, except in such out-of-the-way places as this, they dare not show their sympathy openly.

It was now about five o'clock in the morning and I was just beginning to feel anxious about the train when I saw our old attendant arrive at the market and start buying himself some provisions.

"Let's hurry back to the village and see the bakery!" I suggested. So off we went and soon

found it without the slightest difficulty; there was the usual queue of about two hundred people waiting outside. Evidently the first baking had been sold out, because no one was getting any bread.

The bakery was a large wooden shed that looked like an ancient cowshed. The roof was made of thatch and looked more ruinous than the building itself, which seemed about to collapse sideways, and become *kapoot*. Inside was a table about thirty feet long and perhaps six wide. A large oven was being stoked by several bakers who were stripped to the waist, but who looked much more like blacksmiths than bakers.

On the table was a huge slab of unappetizing brown dough, which was being sliced into loaves. On the ground were several enormous wooden tubs containing more dough which was being vigorously kneaded by the bakers' assistants. So vigorous was their kneading that every now and then the whole building shook and a liberal supply of thatch from the roof with all its animal contents, well moistened by perspiration from the bakers' bodies, fell into the dough and disappeared.

By the time that bread reached the oven it was already filthy, and by the time the purchaser had bought a loaf and carried it home under his arm in the blazing sun, it must have been delicious. My taste for black bread was never very great, but after

seeing it made I had the greatest difficulty in stomach-  
aching it.)

No sooner had I arrived at the station than two Red soldiers approached me, and tapping me on the shoulder they beckoned me to follow them. What was I arrested for now? I wondered. I had no camera with me; I had purposely left it in my carriage for fear of such arrest.

Off we marched, followed by Olga, who had come to my rescue and entered into a violent argument with my captors. The office of the Commandant to which I was being escorted was attached to one end of the railway station and looked suspiciously as if it had once been the gentlemen's lavatory in the days when Russia had gentlemen. In a few minutes I was standing before a young man dressed more like an officer than his men, but not much more. No English was spoken, only lots of Russian. After ten minutes' argument in which Olga, the Commandant and his two privates joined, Olga turned to me:

"They have found your camera in the carriage and they accuse you of taking photographs out of the train window."

The accusation was absolutely false. While I would dearly have liked to photograph some of the sights I had seen from the train, especially the freight cars full of Kulaks and the children eating

grass and the miles of weeds, I had given Olga my word of honor not to break that law of the Soviets which prohibits photographs in the neighborhood of railway stations. After protesting my innocence, the offending camera, which was lying on the Commandant's desk, was opened and the unexposed roll of film destroyed. My camera was then returned to me with a lot of Russian that I didn't understand and I was permitted to get back on the train.

Thank God it was only one more day to Vladikavkaz, where we were to leave the train and continue our journey to Ararat by automobile.

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## *Chapter Nine*

### WE ARRIVE IN VLADIKAVKAZ

**B**UT THINGS were much worse in the days of the Czar" is the commonest retort whenever any criticism is made of present conditions in Russia. I therefore do not apologize but think that many of my readers will find it interesting to hear some of the impressions of Lord Bryce, England's famous ambassador to Washington, and a man whose observations command the respect of most people. The following notes were made by Lord Bryce in 1878.

"In Russia there are only two classes of travelers, those to whom expense incurred for comfort and propriety is nothing, and those to whom comfort and propriety are scarcely known. The former carry their bedding with them and the latter do not go to bed at all!"

Here is what Bryce has to say about Russian cooking:

"Russia is eminently a land of good cooking; even there cabbage broth on which one often has to fall back, is usually tasty and nourishing."

Speaking of the external appearance of the people:

"If I were asked to characterize the most conspicuous externals of Russia in three words, they would be: sheepskins, cucumbers and emeralds!"

In view of the present Five-Year Plan, notice what Bryce had to say fifty-five years ago:

"The Russians are eager to become a great commercial nation. As to the future, one speculates on the aspect which this vast fertile territory [speaking of the Ukraine and North Caucasus] will present a century or two hence, when it has been all brought under cultivation, when populous towns have arisen, when coal mines have been opened and yellow harvests wave all over these now lonely downs. If Russia is then still Russia, a nation, one in sentiment and faith, swayed by a single will, she may become a tremendous power in the world."

As for railroad travel:

"In no country except America is railroad traveling so easy, I might almost say enjoyable, as in Russia. The seats even in the second class are wide and comfortable and can be adjusted to form an excellent couch where one can sleep soundly all night long.

"Excellent refreshment rooms are provided at intervals of three or four hours, at all of which the passengers take hearty meals washed down by vodka or countless glasses of lemon flavored tea!"

What a change today, because if there is one place on earth where such conditions are absent it is Russia, especially the Ukraine and the North Caucasus.

But as far as we were concerned, constant discomfort and hunger gradually became a part of the game. It is surprising how one can almost become accustomed to being lousy and deprived of the luxury of a bath, especially in the excitement of approaching a section of the earth that is probably the most famous and historical of all places, the Caucasus Mountains and Mount Ararat.

The character of the country changed rapidly as we approached the Sea of Azov, which the ancients, considering its shallowness and the fact that its water is almost fresh, more appropriately called a marsh!

At the very north of the Sea of Azov is the town of Taganrog, that was once a great shipping port for wheat in the days when the Ukraine was not covered with weeds.

Like all the other stations, it was crowded with dreadful-looking people, half naked and covered with sores, but evidently not so badly off for food.

I presume they live principally on fish, because swarms of people crowded around us trying to sell baked fish. What kind of fish they were I cannot say, but they tasted all right. Each fish was held between two pieces of wood which had been used to hold the fish while it was baked over an open fire.

The whole district around Taganrog was extremely prosperous before the Revolution. The wages of common farm laborers was four roubles a day, when roubles were really worth something. (Four roubles in those days would be worth about three dollars.)

Today they wanted four roubles for one fish about the size of a herring and even then their roubles were merely tokens of no actual value except in Russia; which reminds me of a gentleman I met recently in New York, who had just returned from Russia and had brought with him a package of brand-new paper roubles all of which had the same number!

Peter the Great died in Taganrog, but I found that Olga had never heard of him, though she did know that Chekhov, the great Russian dramatist and story writer, was born there.

Olga spoke of Chekhov as if he had been a Communist! She hadn't the slightest idea that his father was a tradesman and the son of a serf. If



I had told her that under the old régime such a man, instead of being treated like a dog and beaten with the knout, was educated in his native town and took his degree at Moscow University, she would not have believed it.

For the first time since leaving Moscow the countryside began to look prosperous. For miles we could see nothing but sunflowers, which are cultivated here in enormous quantities. We amused ourselves by noticing that the majority of the blossoms faced the sun at all times, so that they must turn around through practically one hundred eighty degrees between sunrise and sunset. At night I suppose they unwind!

At Taganrog we had taken on several interesting-looking people who were entirely unlike any we had seen hitherto. These newcomers were mountaineers on their way home to the Caucasus. All were well dressed in heavy woolen clothes, and carried long knives at their waists, slung from solid silver belts.

One man in particular attracted our attention. He was well over six feet and, except that he was badly disfigured by smallpox, he was good-looking, had splendid teeth and a grand smile. As he badly needed a shave, I gave him a new safety razor, whereupon he started a long conversation with Olga, probably inquiring who we were and where

we were going. Finally he turned to us and started to speak, using Olga as an interpreter.

It appeared that he was an Ingushete (if that is the proper name for an inhabitant of Ingushetia). He informed us that his people were most hospitable to strangers and invited us to visit his "aul" or village, where he was the headman! Although conversing with him was rather tedious on account of having to use an interpreter, we learned some interesting and amusing things about his people, who are Mohammedans.

Apparently he had not heard of Communism; neither did the name Stalin seem to have any effect on him. He may have heard of him, but I doubt it. His country was independent and was apparently a great place for family feuds.

He said that if I came to stay with him, I could sleep with his wife to show how much he trusted and honored me; but if I made any improper advances to her, he would kill me! He also explained that in his village we would be free to go anywhere and see anything provided the sun had not set, but if we were out after dark, it would be his duty to rob us of everything we had!

I was about to admire his silver belt and dagger when Olga warned me that, if I did so, he would consider it his duty to present me with it, and that such a breach of manners on my part might

result in his similarly admiring my watch and chain.

He then told us that he spent most of his time fighting some friend of his, but that if we happened to see him fighting, we could stop the fight if my wife threw her handkerchief between them!

Somehow our contact with this wild mountaineer who had never heard of Communism and who was so obviously proud of his independence acted on us like a tonic. The prospect of soon leaving the train and being off into the mountains by ourselves without being constantly surrounded by disease and starvation, filled us with new life. As the train steamed away, leaving us surrounded by our baggage in the station yard, we gave a sigh of relief that we would never have to ride on any more Russian trains and that Moscow and Leningrad would never see us again, if we could help it.

Ahead of us was the last lap of Soviet territory, one of the most interesting automobile drives in the world, the Georgian Military Highway that crosses the Caucasus Mountains to Tiflis and on to Erivan. Beyond Erivan was Turkey. Our passports were already visaed by the Turkish authorities for entrance via Igdir and thence to Constantinople and home via the Mediterranean.

It was fortunate that we did not then know that getting into Russia is one thing, but that getting

out again is quite another proposition. Here in America, it is just the opposite. Getting in is difficult but getting out is the easiest thing imaginable.

Olga had telegraphed for a car and truck to meet us, and while we waited for their arrival we occupied ourselves by searching one another for bedbugs and other vermin like a trio of monkeys in the zoo.

It was a journey of several hours to Vladikavkaz, but the drive was delightful and full of interest. At one stage of the journey the countryside suddenly became beautifully cultivated. Cattle grazed in green meadows, the roads were well kept and the fences neatly built. Soon we saw a pretty cottage with a nice flower garden and a regular old-fashioned barnyard full of fine chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese.

Then we came to the neatest little village I had seen since leaving New England. There was a main street bordered by quaint foreign-looking houses with bright flowers in their window boxes. Groups of nicely dressed children, all blondes with blue eyes, were standing at the gates of the houses watching us as we passed. The little girls had their long hair done in two plaits that fell one over each shoulder. Then I saw several fat old ladies sitting in a garden with some well-dressed men who were all smoking regular German pipes.

Either I was dreaming of Germany or this must be a German village: there was no mistaking the costumes, features of the people and the general neatness of all the houses and stores.

Olga must have seen my look of astonishment because she said gruffly: "These people are not Russians — they are Germans."

Whether she knew or not, Olga claimed she could not explain the presence of this German colony in the North Caucasus, and it was not until I left the country and searched my old books on Russia that I discovered the explanation.

Catherine the Second, Empress of Russia (1729-1796) and better known as Catherine the Great, was a German and she ruled Russia for thirty-four years. With the object of teaching the Russian serfs how to farm and induce them to copy the extraordinary industry and cleanliness of the peasants in Germany, Catherine imported quite a large number of German colonists most of whom were Mennonites who in many respects are similar to Quakers. They do not believe in war and have their own special ideas on education, dress and general deportment. Catherine promised them that they should never be required to violate their conscientious scruples, especially their religious convictions which were far removed from those of Russia.

Catherine's hopes, however, were never realized. Although the new colonists arrived and set up their villages all over this part of Russia, they kept strictly to themselves, not intermarrying with the Russians and often not even bothering to learn the Russian language. Many of these villages still exist, surrounded by the best farms in the whole country — German islands in a sea of comparative savages.

How long the present Government will keep the promise of Catherine remains to be seen, but even in the days of the last Czar, these Germans were getting a bit nervous lest they be drafted against their will into the Russian Army.

Our chauffeur tried to get some gasoline in this German village but either there was none or they couldn't understand Russian, because the only response he got to his request was a blank stare. Fortunately we had an emergency can of gas which took us into Vladikavkaz.

As we drove to the hotel I remembered learning about Vladikavkaz, the Key to the Caucasus, in my geography class at school.

The guidebook to the Soviet Union describes Vladikavkaz as "an autonomous town of Northern Caucasia with a population of 72,000 consisting of Russians, Ossetins, Armenians, Georgians, Persians, Greeks, Jews, Ingushs, etc." Among the etcetera are such people as Lesghians, Avars, Tchetshens,

Ossets, Ir, Kabardans, Adighe, Suans, Abhasians, Tatars, Tcherkesses, Pshaws, Tushins and Khevsurs, etc., and dozens of other weird people with still weirder languages and customs whose names I can't remember. Authorities on the subject place the number of different languages spoken in the Caucasus anywhere from one hundred to two hundred and all these different races blame it on Noah whose descendants built the Tower of Babel with the resultant confusion of tongues!

As an example of a nice convenient language: if an Avar wants to say "This man is in the house," he says "Dow tchi wugo roquo!"

It can now be imagined what a crowd in Vladikavkaz looks like and what it sounds like to try and register in a hotel! An ordinary conversation between a husband and wife sounds like a dog fight!

I cannot say whether there is any foundation of fact in the Bible account of the Flood and the subsequent confusion of tongues, but it certainly is a most extraordinary coincidence that within sight of Mount Ararat there actually is more confusion of tongues than anywhere else on earth. Not only that, but there is at least one town named after one of Noah's grandsons, and another town that was actually founded by Noah after he descended from Ararat, and another town in which Noah is said

to have lived before the Flood, according to the local inhabitants.

The reader will find it interesting to read the Book of Genesis, Chapters 6 to 11, that tell the story of Noah, the Flood, the building of the Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues, and keep Genesis in mind during the rest of this book.

In Chapter 6, verse 11: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence."

So, according to the Bible, it was this that made God decide to clean up this section of the world by means of the Flood.



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## *Chapter Ten*

### MACHINERY MAD

OUR arrival in Vladikavkaz caused quite a sensation to judge from the crowd that collected around the hotel to watch us enter.

From the outside, the hotel looked rather inviting, but alas! the inside was simply swarming with flies. They looked just like our ordinary house fly in America, but they had a horrible habit of settling around our eyes. The local residents apparently were used to them; it was quite a common sight to see people walking down the street with half a dozen flies taking a drink from each eye. As for the local babies, they seemed to sleep quite soundly with their faces covered with flies.

The main street in front of the hotel was cobbled and down its center ran a narrow grass plot with trees and a path. Two street-car lines ran one on each side of the grass plot.

About once every fifteen minutes a regular

"Toonerville" trolley car would bounce and sway along, threatening to leave the track at any minute.

On being shown to our bedroom, we found that the beds had no mattresses or bedding, although after much argument the missing bedding was provided, unfortunately!

Like the berths on the train, they looked all right until they warmed up from contact with our bodies, and then the same telltale fumes rose to greet us.

Meals were served in a large dining room that had seen better days, and menus were quite unnecessary. All you had to do to find out what there was to eat was to look at the tablecloth.

Yet, after our semi-starvation on the train, we almost enjoyed our meals in Vladikavkaz, which consisted principally of soup made of sour milk mixed with flour, forming a thick dough-like paste. Another delightful surprise was to find a hot water heater outside our bedroom so that we were all able to have a thorough wash for the first time in many days. Soap, however, was absolutely unobtainable; but we had our own supply and left a couple of cakes behind us for the benefit of the next travelers.

Although we were not expecting any letters, we asked for mail at the hotel desk and to our surprise the clerk handed us a letter addressed "To Any Americans."

On opening the letter we found that it was from

an American who said that he was seriously ill in the Vladikavkaz hospital and begged any of his countrymen to pay him a visit.

With visions of the excellent hospital we had seen in Moscow while on the conducted tour with the *Kungsholm* passengers, we immediately drove to the hospital. On the way we passed a company of Red soldiers marching and singing at the tops of their voices, followed by a crowd of half-naked children beating a drum and waving a large red flag.

We also noticed a strange-looking man walking about with a guidebook, making copious notes. He was dressed in a tweed suit, knickers and carried a sun umbrella. When I saw his face I noticed that he wore spectacles and had a long brown beard. On his back he had a bulky knapsack and looked like the typical hiker one meets so often in Europe. At the time we first noticed him he was taking a photograph of a monument.

Olga, who had never been so far south before, had to ask the chauffeur what the monument was for and he informed us that it marked the spot where sixteen thousand soldiers of the Red Army who were suffering from typhus had been buried alive by White soldiers during the Russian Civil War. How true this is I cannot say, but it sounded dreadful. Upon my repeating my question, he

again said, "Yes, sixteen thousand buried alive!"

We afterwards met the man with the brown beard and found that he was a German Doctor of Chemistry, who was traveling alone making a study of the Russian hospitals and chemical factories.

After about fifteen minutes' drive we came to a group of low buildings surrounded by a high brick wall. At the entrance to the hospital was a crowd of about two hundred people, milling around and shouting. The scene was much like the one we had witnessed outside the Moscow railway station, except that these people had no bundles, but in many cases were bandaged up with rags that had once been white. Some had their heads bandaged, others had arms in slings, but most of them were evidently injured in the hands.

Pushing our way through the crowd, we came to a small wicket in a heavy wooden door. Olga rapped at the wicket which immediately opened. I could not understand the words that were shouted through the wicket, but I had a pretty good idea that someone shouted: "Wait your turn! wait your turn! don't make such a devil of a row out there!" whereupon the wicket was slammed shut.

Again Olga rapped, at the same time shouting at the top of her voice to the person inside. This time, when the wicket opened, I could see a man in a surgeon's white outfit, but after listening to Olga

he shook his head. I then took out the letter I had been given at the hotel, and without handing it to the doctor, I held it up where he could see it while Olga told him its contents. The wicket closed and after a short delay the gate opened and we were admitted into the courtyard.

Around a large open space was a series of small brick buildings, evidently the wards. The mud in the yard was inches deep, and walking around in the mud like ghosts were about a dozen men dressed in hospital pyjamas, convalescents. Leading us to one of the houses, the doctor knocked at the door and immediately left us.

"Come in!" said a voice in English.

Never shall I forget the scene as we entered; and as for the smell, the less said about it the better. A deep hum arose as our entrance disturbed about a thousand flies that had covered the bed. The room must have measured about ten by six feet, as there was only just enough space for a small iron cot and a rough wooden table.

Lying in the bed was a young man about twenty-five, I should judge. His face was the color of chalk, unshaven and dirty. He was dressed in dirty pyjamas that looked as if they had been made from an old flour sack. A stinking blanket was thrown over him and there he was, covered with flies, reading *Humanity Uprooted*, by Maurice

Hindus. Beside his bed was an iron pail which gave forth a loud buzz when it was touched. Behind his head was a broken glass window about eighteen inches square.

Seeing that he was desperately ill, I refrained at first from making any remarks about the dreadful state of his bed and room, but opening my knapsack I handed him a package of America's most advertised cigarettes. Then I gave him a cake of soap, a new toothbrush from Woolworth's and our one remaining can of sweet condensed milk. When he saw the milk tears came to his eyes and he began his story.

It appears that he was a Harvard graduate, and interested in Communism. He had come to Russia several weeks before to study Communism first hand, but he had been foolish enough to eat some Russian cucumber salad, with the result that he had contracted a bad case of dysentery. He told us that he had been in that room for three weeks and they hadn't changed the linen; that there was no real doctor in the hospital, only some young medical students whose knowledge of medicine was less than that of the trained nurses. He had been forbidden to eat any food but was being given a few glasses of wine daily.

When we arrived, he had almost given up hope of ever getting out of the hospital, but when he saw

that can of condensed milk, he said: "This is my last chance, I'll stop the hospital diet and see if this milk will give me enough strength to get to the railway station. But in case I don't get well, here is my name and address." I then wrote down: Wilbur B. Miller, care of Walter Stanton, Stowe, Massachusetts.

"Do you give me permission to use your name in my lectures and in a book I am going to write?"

"Absolutely," he answered, "and if I can ever repay you for your goodness to me, I will." He then gave me an unopened bottle of wine for which we were extremely grateful.

Having lit a cigarette, Miller gave us a description of life in a Russian hospital that was not open to the inspection of investigators traveling as guests of the Soviet Government!

"See those pyjamas?" he said. "I didn't have any at all for several days, but then the fellow next to me died and they brought his pyjamas over to me from the morgue!"

"But, my God!" I exclaimed, "don't they ever clean out this bucket or change your bedclothes?"

"No!" he answered. "That's the trouble with their brand of Communism; now that everyone is equal, who is going to empty the slop pail?"

"An old sow had a litter of pigs in the next room," he continued.

"In the maternity ward I suppose," I remarked facetiously.

Just then our conversation was interrupted by some terrible screams, and Miller remarked: "They scream themselves to death here. You see, most of the patients come from a factory where they have some new American machinery. The wretched workers have no idea how to use it, so there is a regular stream of people with broken arms, and crushed fingers. That person screaming is a girl who came in here last night with her arm torn off!"

"Don't they have morphia or something to stop the pain?" I asked.

"Good Lord, no," he replied. "They scarcely have any bandages, let alone anæsthetics. I have to lie here and listen to the screams of people being operated on without anæsthetics. Most of them die and then their friends collect around the morgue and start wailing."

We never expected to see Miller again, but that can of milk must have saved his life because several weeks later we met him in Paris!

"Are you still interested in Communism?" I inquired.

"Cured for ever!" he exclaimed.

"Don't forget that I'm going to mention you in a book," I reminded him.

"That's okay with me," he answered. "If people



won't believe what you tell them — just refer them to me."

Miller's case was an example of the finest way of curing anyone of an interest in Communism. Compel them to spend at least a month in Russia without the benefit of Intourist guidance, and I'll warrant ninety-nine percent of our drawing room Bolsheviks, especially Senators, university professors and well-fed columnists will come scuttling back to the United States so fast you'll not be able to see them for dust.

Even Olga was visibly upset by the conditions in this Vladikavkaz hospital but she assured me that she was positive that Moscow had no idea of such a state of affairs. Perhaps Olga included a description of this hospital in her daily report to headquarters; if she did, then in all probability some of those medical students have been liquidated by now, but I doubt that the hospital itself has changed much.

That evening Olga informed us that no car was available for us to drive over the Caucasus, and that it would be necessary for us all to travel by motor bus!

Even in this book I must not put into print my outburst of bad language, but suffice it to say that we utterly refused to leave the hotel until a good car was forthcoming. Not even if the motor bus

had been as luxurious as the long-distance busses in America would we have used one, simply because they were crowded with every imaginable race of people each of whom gave forth a different odor. It was bad enough to see people rotten with open sores, but to have to rub shoulders with them for two days was absolutely unbearable.

Poor Olga, she did her best to make us comfortable, and no person could have been more loyal to Intourist, but the farther she got from Moscow the less she was able to accomplish. She then brought along the local manager of Intourist, his head shaved and as shiny as a billiard ball.

Before giving him an opportunity to explain, and remembering the advice of our British friend in Moscow, I forgot all politeness and simply created a scene, with the result that a brand-new Lincoln car soon appeared!

One glance at the tires showed that they had never been used.

Sitting in the front seat beside the driver was an evil-looking man dressed in a black uniform, with a revolver strapped to a bright yellow leather belt. It is quite possible that I haven't the least idea what a member of the G. P. U. looks like, but this man looked as if he were what the Malays call a "mata gelap," or detective. (Mata gelap means "Night-Eye.")

Evidently this was a propaganda car that had been kept under cover, awaiting the arrival of some American investigator who might report to his Government upon the desirability of recognizing Russia.

So far as I could ascertain from people who had lived for years in Moscow, most of these investigators are taken around like a lot of sheep and are kept as close as possible to the big cities. When they have to travel by train, their carriages are thoroughly cleaned and fumigated; special food is always sent ahead to the hotels they are to visit and everything that is humanly possible is done to make sure they see absolutely nothing but what the Soviet Government wants them to see.

I'd dearly love to be able to send some of our college professors and a few other Government officials to Russia, under assumed names and with false passports, and let them wander about without any political pull or backscratching, just for one month. They'd soon be home again, cured!

The whole trouble with these Russian experts, some of whom have been in Russia for several years making a careful study of the Great Experiment, is that they are known to the Russians as experts. They are little removed from ordinary spies except that, knowing they have come to Russia to spy openly, the Soviet Government fools them into thinking

they are being allowed to see anything they wish. After reading Will Durant's account of his travels in Russia I have come to the conclusion that he saw plenty because he traveled incognito. He had no more trouble traveling incognito than I did, because he was probably unknown to most people in Russia anyway! I doubt whether they would allow his excellent books in Russia, for they are not Communist propaganda. Any person who has the least powers of observation cannot help seeing that Russia from one end to the other simply reeks with anti-American propaganda. The biggest blind of all is their craving for recognition, which some of our misguided politicians regard as a compliment to the greatness of America.

After fifteen years, including a great Five-Year Plan, Russia is almost *kapoot*. Desperately hard up for foreign money of any kind, especially American dollars, she now finds that her foreign specialists, to whom belongs the credit for any success her Five-Year Plan may have accomplished, are refusing to be paid in worthless paper roubles.

In spite of the fact that Russia employs about six times as many men per mile as we do in America, her railroads are so dilapidated from want of maintenance that those few trains that can still hobble along are continually breaking down. Many of her enormous factories become dilapidated and

*kapoot* at one end before the other end is complete.

The only thing that can save her from collapse is foreign money and the easiest mark for that is America, via the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and Recognition. How Russians must be laughing up their sleeves at America for lending them millions of dollars with which to buy American goods!

What will Russia do with the machinery and money she gets from America? She will use a great deal of the money to pay the wages of bigger and better American specialists who will teach her how to use the machinery. American engineers will put her railroads in running order and improve her other means of transportation without which her ambitious scheme to become the greatest industrial country in the world cannot possibly succeed.

In the meantime, *political recognition will give Russia the right to place a Russian consul in cities all over the United States*, and that consul will be a *Communist*. He will be the *nucleus of a soviet*.

The consul will organize existing American Communists and create Communists where such do not already exist, so that when the great day arrives for World Revolution, America will be thoroughly permeated with Communistic ideas.

It is amazing that the United States should calmly finance a government which has frequently stated

that its object is the overthrow of all capitalistic governments, especially those of America and England.

I had frequent discussions with Olga and other rank and file Communists. All of them told me that it would not be long before Russia would be supplying America with practically everything America now supplied her.

Take cotton, for instance. Although we were told the fields were experimental, we saw enormous areas of Southern Russia sown with cotton.

In the case of lumber, and wood pulp for paper, Russia is already well on the way to ruining those industries in America, Canada and Sweden, because she produces it by forced labor and is thereby able to undersell all other countries.

I must apologize for this political outburst, but it was brought on by seeing the headlines in the press, that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation were going to lend Russia several million of our taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, in order that she might purchase American cotton.

Let me return to that propaganda car—the Lincoln.

Several hundred of Vladikavkaz's mixed population assembled to watch us start out for the Caucasus, and it was easy to see that the new Lincoln was something they had never seen before. They

surrounded the car twenty to thirty deep, struggling to get a glimpse of the engine. Machinery mad, Russians love to watch the wheels go round, but they usually forget the oil!

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*Chapter Eleven*

THROUGH THE CAUCASUS  
TO PASSANAUR

*"Civilization in Russia is like a coat of paint over unseasoned wood!"*

— LORD BRYCE

ONCE YOU get into the Caucasus Mountains, practically every man you meet is fully armed; in fact, a cartridge belt and an array of daggers dangling from the belt seems to be part of the ordinary costume of the country.

The town of Vladikavkaz commands the entrance to the mountains, being at the mouth of the famous Pass of Dariel through which has been constructed the Georgian Military Highway. Immediately south of the city, its snowy peaks towering up into the sky and forming an immense rampart between Europe and Asia, is the main range of the Caucasus.

It was drizzling rain as we started out in our



car toward the pass, and the lofty peaks were soon covered with masses of billowy white clouds that descended right into the valley. After about ten miles, the road entered a superb gorge the side of which rose in wonderful precipices five to six thousand feet above the rushing Terek River which here emerges from the mountains. In many places the road had been cut into the side of the overhanging precipice so that the little streams above shot in spray right over the roadway. Here and there great falls of rock made it necessary for us to drive the car right in the bed of the river, which is very shallow and full of round pebbles.

Dotted about could be seen strange-looking Osset villages, looking more like groups of beehives than houses, with small stone towers, perched on some particularly inaccessible eminence.

These towers are for refuge against sudden attack or during a feud between two families. People have been known to remain in these towers for years. Their relatives are permitted to bring them food while they are besieged by their enemies, but should they attempt to leave the tower, they are shot down.

For the first few miles the valley is fairly wide, but about sixteen miles from Vladikavkaz it seems suddenly to come to an end, from which, rushing furiously over immense boulders and crags, the Terek River descends in a series of cataracts. The

road is then cut into the solid rock, rising rapidly up the side of the mountain.

Both sides of the narrow gorge rise almost vertically to about four thousand feet and behind them are still higher ranges of broken jagged mountains flecked with snow and apparently devoid of any vegetation. No mountains in the world look so savage and forbidding as the Caucasus.

Soon we came to a spot where the ravine widened out slightly and here we saw ruins of an ancient fortress where, according to the Georgian legend, Queen Tamara lived and loved. She is said to have liked variety, and as soon as she tired of one lover she had him flung into the gorge and took on another. This fortress has been attributed sometimes to Darius, son of Hystaspes, and sometimes to Alexander the Great. It is practically certain that it marks the farthest point to which the dominion of Rome ever reached on this side.

The walls of Dariel Gorge itself are of granite although about four miles above the fortress there is a splendid range of basalt columns very much like those of the Giant's Causeway. About twenty-seven miles from Vladikavkaz the road suddenly makes a turn and we found ourselves in a circular hollow in the mountains and face to face with Mount Kasbek, sixteen thousand five hundred and forty-six feet above sea level. Right opposite the mountain

is the ancient village of Kasbek, and between the village and the mountain, perched on the very top of a smaller mountain, is a deserted monastery.

Although Mount Kasbek is not the highest in the Caucasus, being exceeded by at least three others, the highest of which is Elbruz, 18,526 feet, Kasbek is by far the most famous. From time immemorial it has been held in superstitious awe and reverence by the people.

It was on Kasbek that Medea is supposed to have compounded her love potions and poisons. It was to the rocky summit of Kasbek that Prometheus was chained and suffered torment as a punishment for stealing fire from heaven.

Kasbek is supposed to be the very birthplace of magic and the nesting place of the roc, that enormous bird mentioned in the *Arabian Nights*, that used to carry off elephants to feed its babies!

To the Ossetes, Kasbek is "Christ's Mountain." They will tell you that a rope, visible only to the elect, leads to a holy grotto in which are preserved the Tent of Abraham and the Cradle of Christ. On the very top of the mountain there is supposed to be a splendid crystal castle and near it a temple in the middle of which hovers a golden dove. None of these interesting things were discovered when the mountain was first climbed by Mr. Douglas Freshfield in 1868.

Olga had never been in this part of the Soviet Union before and although at first she was inclined to scoff and sneer at the legends which were indeed Greek to her, she soon began to ask questions about the *Arabian Nights* and was just as eager to hear about them as any young capitalist. It was obvious that her mind was starved for knowledge of the outside world, even though some of the things I told her actually were fairy tales. She could not understand why I wanted to photograph such a useless thing as a mountain, and still less could she understand why I should want to climb one.

The chauffeur and the evil-looking member of the G. P. U. were openly impatient for us to continue our journey to Tiflis. Scenery meant absolutely nothing to them; the mountains depressed them, they couldn't speak the language of any of the natives we met on the road and to them the haughty air of superiority of some of the tribesmen was most annoying.

Olga was just like a fish out of water. No longer was she the Intourist guide who knew everything. The tables were turned: she was on a conducted tour, and although I myself knew only what I had read in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, I was able to keep her spell-bound with my apparent boundless knowledge of this wonderful country.

Although the chauffeur didn't know it, I had no intention of carrying on to Tiflis at about sixty miles an hour; I had planned to break the journey at a place called Passanaur and then strike off into the very heart of the mountains on horseback, or at least make the attempt.

Soon after leaving Kasbek we arrived in a small village called Kobi where we stopped to take a series of photographs of the various types of mountaineers. Although none of us could make ourselves understood by talking, we had no trouble in getting them to pose for us, which they evidently enjoyed immensely.

Although most of the men were in rags, there were a few who had evidently come down from the mountain villages where Communism was unknown. These men were well dressed in their national costumes and armed to the teeth.

When they saw me taking special care to photograph a man who looked as if he would fall out of his rags at any moment, they roared with laughter and evidently started to make fun of him for being in rags, possibly taunting him for being such a fool as to live in a village that was controlled by the local soviet, because I saw the evil-looking G. P. U. representative glare at them and shout something in Russian, but it had no effect.

The easiest way to find out how the peasants were

dressed before the Revolution is to buy some Russian dolls. We found that several different kinds of dolls could be purchased. All were cleverly made and nicely dressed in various costumes; of course not in rags, but as the people themselves used to dress. We bought dolls from women who looked like tramps, but the dolls themselves were pretty.

There is no country in the world where women are more completely emancipated than in Russia, with the result that women do most of the heavy labor while the men do the overseeing!

Russia's new generation of Communist women have little sex appeal for the average American. Most of them have thick ankles, muscular arms, necks like bulls, hands like legs of mutton and such shapeless figures that at a distance it is hard to tell whether they are coming or going. Just as women can be seen working in gangs on the railroad, so can they be seen mending the roads in the Caucasus; but only in the villages close to the Military Highway. Once away from the road, you find the women riding horseback; fierce-looking females with long black hair and voluminous clothes, utterly different from the short-skirted bare-legged women of the Ukraine and North Russia.

The summit of the pass between Vladikavkaz and Tiflis is 8,015 feet above sea level and about twenty miles beyond Kasbek. From here the road descends

an almost precipitous mountain face in a series of long zigzags until at their foot you come to a pretty little Georgian village named Mleti. The scenery is a strange mixture of pastoral beauty and stern ruggedness of the huge red mountains, their hollows filled with snow and their sides strewn with great boulders.

From Mleti we continued through the valley of the Aragva River, and the lower we descended the more luxuriant became the vegetation, with dense woods of deciduous trees such as oak, beech and hazel, until at seven o'clock in the evening of July 27th we suddenly arrived at the village of Passanaur. If Intourist only had the sense to advertise the beauty of the Caucasus as much as they do the Five-Year Plan, the income from foreign tourists would be much greater.

It was almost dark when we arrived at the inn and to our great astonishment and delight we found the garden set with small tables surrounded by roses and other old-fashioned flowers.

Here we were met by an Intourist guide who had been sent from Tiflis with a car and instructions to bring us in to Tiflis as quickly as possible. This new guide, together with Olga, the chauffeur and the evil-looking "mata gelap," made four persons who had now attached themselves to our party. The newcomer was a man whom I will call Ivan.

He was a Georgian prince, although he informed us that he no longer worked at it.

Speaking of princes, Lord Bryce has this to say:

"It is a joke among Russians that every Georgian is a noble; and as the only title of nobility is 'Prince,' the effect to an English ear of hearing all sorts of obscure people, country postmasters, droshky drivers, sometimes even obscure servants, described as being Prince So-and-so is at first grotesque."

Finding that he could speak English and having learned that he was a prince, I took Ivan to one side and slipping him a five-dollar bill said: "For the love of Mike, get us some mutton!"

For the moment I had completely forgotten that tips are strictly forbidden in Russia and to offer such an amount as five dollars to an Intourist guide of all people might have got me into trouble for bribery. But our Prince was a real Prince, and winking his eye and pocketing the five dollars, he disappeared.

Several days afterward he asked me to give him five one-dollar bills for the same five-dollar bill, so I know perfectly well he didn't pay out any good American money for the wonderful and only decent meal we had the whole time we were in Russia, not counting the bacon and eggs at the



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British Embassy or the meal at the restaurant of the Y.M.C.A. in Moscow.

Olga had evidently never seen such a meal in her life! We had an enormous platter piled high with small pieces of roast mutton that was simply delicious. Even the bread was free from chewed string and, although I strongly suspect that the milk originated in some old nanny goat, it all tasted grand. And for dessert we had sliced peaches and a bottle of wine.

All our troubles were forgotten; Olga was a new person now that her stomach was really full, probably for the first time in her life, and we found ourselves in such good humor that we began to blame ourselves for all our hardships and were ready to believe that our treatment by Intourist was all a mistake. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day, and perhaps we had been exceptionally unfortunate in our choice of a train.

While Olga and Zetta started to explore our sleeping quarters and Snitch developed samples of our motion pictures, I took a stroll around the garden with Ivan. I immediately started to tell him of our experiences on the journey from Moscow to Valdikavkaz.

Looking around him furtively, Ivan whispered to me: "When you go back to America, tell them what you have seen; tell them everything!"

I was so astonished that I couldn't speak for a moment; then I asked him, "don't you people do something about it, if you don't like being Communists?"

Ivan answered me by tapping his revolver and pointing it at his left ear and then cutting his throat with it. Having done so, he said with a grin, "Well, that's all!" He then told me that Olga professed to be the same as he did, and he tried to tell me that Olga and I had talked about on the way to Moscow.

Suddenly, with a start, I thought that Ivan was perhaps an agent provocateur, who was trying to find out if I was a spy or perhaps he was trying to get the goods on me; in any case I changed the subject rather suddenly and asked him if he knew any of the Russians who were in charge of the New York Intourist office.

"What beats me," I continued, "is that those fellows don't run away and never go back to Russia, when they find how comfortable and luxurious life is in America."

"They daren't, even if they wanted to," remarked Ivan.

He then explained to me the regular system of hostages that Russia has worked out to prevent the desertion of their employees in foreign countries. Apparently only men who have parents alive, or

children or very close relatives at home in Russia, are allowed to go abroad. When their time is due to return to headquarters, should they not obey, they know perfectly well that their loved ones will suffer for it. Ivan told me that the Government would not hesitate to shoot a man's wife if he deserted his post and remained in America.

"What's all this about your being a prince, Ivan?" I inquired with a laugh. "If you were to go to America, you could probably marry some famous actress in Hollywood or even a great heiress!"

"Ah! You Americans do not understand!" he answered with perfect frankness. "Nearly every man in my village was a prince. As for me, I only had a few cows and a small farm! I was a property owner and my title was attached to the property!"

Apparently even this Georgian himself didn't attach any importance to the fact that he was a prince. He explained very clearly that princes in the Caucasus were just as numerous as bedbugs in a Moscow hotel.

To judge from the way some of her princes have taken America by storm, it looks as if Georgia was marching through America instead of America through Georgia.

Before going to bed that night, I informed Olga that we intended to remain over in Passanaur the

next day and that I wanted to hire some horses and ride to a village of Khevsurs supposed to be located about a day's ride into the mountains.

"But it is forbidden, Mr. Wells," she said beseechingly. "It is most important that we arrive in Tiflis tomorrow, because they need our cars!"

Just then I saw Ivan snooping around outside our bedroom where we were talking to Olga.

"Ivan! How about getting me some horses?" I shouted.

"It can be arranged, provided the local Commandant approves," he said, probably expecting, and correctly expecting, that this would mean another five-dollar bill. "I will go and fetch him."

Within ten minutes he was back again with a very smart-looking cavalry officer, to whom I explained that I wanted to hire some horses.

"I don't mind what it costs," I said, "but I want riding horses for four people and at least two pack horses for our cameras!"

The officer and Olga then had quite a long argument which ended in Olga informing me that if we would pay for everything, the Commandant would show us the way himself to the Khevsur village and would bring along a couple of soldiers for a bodyguard.

The Khevsurs are one of the most interesting races of people inhabiting the Caucasus. There are

about fifteen thousand of them and they live in scattered villages on the most inaccessible mountain-tops they can find. Their numbers would probably be greater were it not for the fact that they have practiced birth control for centuries.

Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove the truth, the Khevsurs themselves claim that they are the descendants of a band of Crusaders who took refuge in the Caucasus mountains after they had been defeated by the Saracens under Saladin. To support their claim they point to their great collection of medieval armor, steel helmets, coats of mail and two-handed swords which they still use in fighting, when some family feud compels them either to seek or to avoid an enemy. They claim that this armor has been handed down from one generation to another for so long that no one can remember anything about it except the legend that it originally belonged to their forefathers.

Although they call themselves Christians, and decorate their clothing with small embroidered crosses, their religion is a mixture of Christianity, Mohammedanism and heathen rites. To make quite sure they are on the right side of the fence, the Khevsurs observe the Sunday of the Christians, the Friday of the Mohammedans and the Saturday of the Jews. While they worship sacred trees and offer

sacrifices to the spirits of the earth and the air, they also worship beer which is kept in large sacred vats in their temples or shrines.

Their priests are a combination of medicine-men and divines, but as far as I could ascertain none of the Khevsurs had ever heard of Christ. Olga had never heard of the Khevsurs before, but the Commandant assured me that if we were able to reach their villages without falling down a precipice, we would have no difficulty in securing pictures of them because they were quite friendly.

Then turning to me he said: "Of course you are a good rider!"

"Sho', sho'," I replied, as if I were Andy bluffing Amos, and suddenly realized that I hadn't been on a horse for at least ten years.

"I suppose the local horses are pretty quiet animals?" I inquired hopefully.

"They have to be," he answered. "There's absolutely no room for a horse to get restive or do any bucking on the road to Khevsuretia, because in many places the trail is only two or three feet wide, with a vertical wall of rock on one side and a precipice on the other!"

Thinking of the mules at the Grand Canyon I said carelessly, "I suppose you just let them make their own pace and pick out their own trail."

"Exactly," answered the Commandant. "All you



have to do is to stick on, and don't try to guide these mountain horses."

That night I slept like a top; but if I had had the most terrifying nightmare, it couldn't have been worse than the fifty-mile ride on horseback into Khevsuretia that I took the next day.

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## *Chapter Twelve*

### KHEVSURETIA, LAND OF THE CRUSADERS

NEWS MUST have spread that we were about to start into the mountains because we were awakened at six o'clock the next morning by the noise of the crowd waiting to see the "crazy Americans." For breakfast we had more roast mutton and quite a liberal supply of fresh eggs.

As this was the first event, so far as I was concerned, that could be classed as exploration, I got out the flag of the Explorers Club, the banner of the Chicago Adventurers Club which they had made especially for this expedition, and the American and British flags.

The moment the flags were seen there was quite a lot of excitement among the crowd and I was afraid they were going to object to our displaying the flags; but I was quite mistaken, because within a few minutes the Commandant arrived on his

horse with an enormous Red flag draped all over it. The Hammer and Sickle were prominently embroidered in gold thread. The hugeness of this Soviet emblem made our own flags look very small, but the variety of flags made an excellent show for the movies.

In deference to the Commandant, we suggested that he take up his position at the head of the cortège, followed by Zetta carrying the Stars and Stripes and the Adventurers Club banner; then came Olga with the flag of the Explorers Club, followed by me with the Union Jack.

Behind us came our pack horses, followed by about half a dozen uninvited guests and Ivan, all on horseback, with two armed soldiers as a rear-guard.

The horses were about the size and build of polo ponies and the saddles were the most uncomfortable affairs it has ever been my misfortune to sit upon. At first glance they looked like Mexican saddles, but in addition to a large knob in front, they had another equally inconvenient knob behind; and if I wasn't on one, I was usually on the other, occasionally landing between the knobs as the horse jogged along with a most uncomfortable gait. I could tell by the expression of the animal's ears that he knew perfectly well I hadn't been on a horse for ten years, and from the moment we started until

we returned to Passanaur the horse was the master.

For the first half mile we were followed by a mob of little boys who were simply splitting their sides, probably at my comic appearance.

Gradually it dawned upon me that I would have to ride all day and most of the night, up hill and down dale, across rivers and along the edges of precipices in order to reach the home of the Khevsurs. It would never do to admit that I had already had all the horseback riding I wanted for the rest of my life, especially as Zetta was galloping along as if she were a cow-girl.

For the next hour I deliberately studied the motions of my horse and by a system of trial and error I discovered that I was able to make good progress, provided he didn't gallop. The moment this happened, I would inevitably rise gracefully and land most painfully on either the fore or the aft knob. I had galloped heaps of times before, but until now I had never been required to land exactly on the same spot to the fraction of an inch.

The ride was so painful that I took every opportunity to stop and admire the scenery, until the Commandant reminded me that unless we intended to camp out all night without any camping equipment or food I would have to keep going steadily. Then I resigned myself to my fate. After riding a few miles I noticed a most unpleasant odor. Ivan

noticed it too, because he called back to me, "Here come some mountaineers!"

Never have I noticed such an individual smell about any human being as these wild-looking men gave off! As they passed us they gave us piercing glances from under their tremendously bushy eyebrows, but didn't utter a word. What tribe they were, Heaven only knows, but they were not Khevsurs because I was on the lookout for those crosses on their clothes, and these fellows had none.

Our route took us up a steep ravine, down which rushed great gusts of cold air from the snow-capped peaks above us. At one spot I saw a man on horseback, sliding down the side of the mountain. Sitting on its haunches with its front legs stuck straight out in front, the horse was sliding merrily along accompanied by an accumulation of stones and boulders that increased every second. Suddenly the rider gave the horse a crack with his whip and both horse and man disappeared in a most mysterious manner. Remembering my conversation on horsemanship with the Commandant the night before, I began to wonder when I and my horse would be expected to glissade for about five hundred feet and then suddenly disappear!

At midday, our whole party dismounted; at least the rest did, and I slid off as gracefully as my blisters would permit.

"How much farther?" I inquired.

"About two hours more!" answered the Commandant. "But now we shall begin to climb!"

"Begin to climb!" I thought with dismay, because I swear that I had already performed feats of horsemanship that equaled any I had seen during the Italian Army maneuvers at the Madison Avenue Trans Lux Theater!

One of the very few authorities on the Khevsurs, Odette Keun, describes their riding as follows:

"A Khevsouri descends an almost perpendicular mountain full of rocky clefts, on horseback, with savage shouts; the beast, as wild as he, with fiery eyes and nostrils, flattening itself against the hillside like a cat, the hoofs touching the belly."

A well-known Khevsur saying is:

"Never have pity on a horse or on a woman. Today you have your own, tomorrow you will take another's."

Had I dreamed of what the rest of the ride was going to be like, I never would have mounted my horse after lunch, but once aboard I started after the rest of the party.

Mile after mile we stumbled and plunged among the boulders in the bed of a rushing torrent of ice-cold water that was milky from some melting glacier, until about four o'clock in the afternoon

when we suddenly came to a small stone hut, built beside the torrent.

Leading into the hut was a wooden aqueduct consisting of tree logs cut in half longitudinally and scooped out to make a channel for the water. Close to the hut, the log sloped down suddenly and entered the hut at the foundations.

On looking inside the hut, we found a complete mill for grinding flour. There was the upper and the nether grindstone that one reads about in the Bible, and underneath and attached to the lower grindstone was a wooden paddle wheel against which the water was rushing. The whole apparatus looked and worked like a modern Pelton wheel except that the driving wheel was horizontal instead of vertical.

About half a mile upstream was another small empty hut. Among the Khevsurs, an expectant mother is considered unclean; she must leave her village and bear her child in solitude in this tiny hut. Alas! this wretched hut was the village maternity hospital!

It should be remembered that in this part of the world the temperature often drops to forty below freezing point, and the snow is frequently thirty feet deep in the ravines, yet notwithstanding this, the moment her labor pains commence, a pregnant woman must immediately leave home and

take up her abode in this small hut, which is only large enough for one person to enter, by stooping.

Here she must look after herself, build a fire and carry her own water in summer or snow in winter. She must also find the materials for and construct her own bed. As for food, this is carried by small girls and placed on the ground midway between the hut and the village.

Not even her mother is allowed to approach nearer than this to the hut, and the only assistance she receives during childbirth is from her husband. Instead of waiting in an anteroom of a hospital, pacing nervously about, in expectation of some tragedy, the Khevsur husband, rifle in hand, marches round and round the hut. Nothing on earth would induce him to enter, but, in case of a difficult confinement, the moment he hears his wife cry out he immediately fires off his rifle into the air, and keeps up the fusillade until the cries die down.

For about a month the mother and child must remain in the hut, at the end of which time she washes herself and the baby in the ice-cold water and returns to her village. Strangely enough, mortality at childbirth is extremely rare.

About a mile beyond the hut, we suddenly came to a mountain that looked like a pyramid with steep sides, on the very top of which could be seen the village we were seeking. Ivan had gone ahead



of us, and if I hadn't actually seen his horse scrambling up the side of that mountain like a cat, I wouldn't have believed it possible for a horse to get up, let alone with a rider on its back.

The moment my horse saw Ivan's he gave a ninny, and without the slightest encouragement from me he began to scramble up the side of the mountain faster than he had been traveling on the level! That horse knew his oats all right; he knew that the top was his destination and that he couldn't go any farther without flying, so, like most horses that get near home, he seemed to be filled with new life and energy.

I would have given anything to climb it on foot, but I couldn't have dismounted had I wished, so there was nothing to do but put my arms around the horse's neck, endeavor to twist my legs around his tail, close my eyes and hope for the best. The rest of the climb seemed like a century, but finally the horse stopped and I found myself on the very summit, surrounded by the rest of the party.

Zetta was so exhausted that she slid off her horse and went sound asleep on the ground without a word. The horses immediately started to graze on the short grass that covered the summit.

To give an adequate idea of the conditions on that mountain is absolutely beyond my powers of description. From below it looked charming, and

I had visions of standing in the breeze letting the wind blow through my hair, which was soaking wet with perspiration, and reviving myself with long deep breaths of the cool mountain air, but appearances were deceptive.

If you have ever been inside a large old-fashioned cowshed that has been occupied for a hundred years and is still very much occupied, then you have some slight idea of the condition and the smell of that mountaintop. Nothing but a river and a whole gang of Hercules could possibly remove all the cowdung that had accumulated in this Khevsur village since its possible founding in the days of the Crusades.

Every house was a small edition of the Augean stables and the collection of houses simply put the most famous cowshed in the history of the world completely in the shade. Here was indeed a remarkable example of the uneven distribution of wealth, because I recently was forced to pay nine dollars for one cubic yard of Connecticut cowdung. The actual summit was quite clean, but about fifty feet from the top, the first row of Khevsur houses commenced.

They were curious structures, half inside the mountain and half outside. The sleeping quarters were excavated deep into the hillside, but each house had a flat projecting roof which not only pro-

tected the veranda, but served as an extra roof veranda and space for a haystack and a threshing floor.

So steep was the hillside that by standing on the veranda of one house you looked immediately down upon the roof of your neighbor. Groups of people were sitting around on the roofs; those on the roof of the first row of houses were so close to us that it was easy to see the little crosses embroidered on their clothing, while those farther down the hillside were so far away that they looked like little dots.

Many of the women were winnowing grain by throwing it up in the air to catch the fetid breeze, which blew away the husks.

Between the rows of houses were the streets, but the cowdung was so deep that our horses sank to their bellies in it, and in order to visit some of the houses we found it easier to go on foot, even though we sank to our knees at every step. Clouds of dung flies swarmed all over us, but we at least had the comfort of knowing that they were not like the disease-laden flies that swarmed about us in the Ukraine.

To the Khevsur a cow is as indispensable as a camel is to an Arab, or a reindeer to a Lapp. Not a scrap of a cow is wasted. The dung is used for building the partitions between the rooms; it is smeared on the floor daily to keep the floor nice

and fresh and free from dust; the dried dung is stacked up in neat piles and used for fuel; fresh dung is often used for keeping unruly strands of hair in place.

Even the urine of the cow is carefully preserved in barrels and used by the women as a shampoo for their long hair, which is frequently the color of a carrot; in fact, except at childbirth, the only washing the Khevsurs indulge in is a lick and a promise.

All their cooking utensils are washed daily in urine, even their milk pails. This probably sounds horrible to people who have not traveled extensively, but this use of cow urine is also the regular custom among the Masai of Africa.

I have no desire deliberately to disgust my readers, but simply to record truthfully my observations as an explorer. This is equally true of my observations of famine, disease and frightful poverty that I have recorded in other sections of this book.

But let there be no misunderstanding about the Khevsurs; they are probably the sturdiest and healthiest people in Soviet Russia, but so far they have been left severely alone by the Soviet tax collector; and Khevsuretia is at least one section of the U.S.S.R. where the Government does not attempt to govern.

After about half an hour, Khevsur men began to arrive, followed by women who looked like witches accompanied by some of the most delight-

ful children I have ever seen. In many respects, the costumes of both the men and the women were similar to those of the Lapps. Both sexes wore trousers and a skirt; but in the case of the men, the skirt reached only to the knees, while in the case of the women it reached to the calf.

Heavy homespun cloth was universal, the colors being black, dark blue, brown and a dark violet. All the dresses were beautifully embroidered with little crosses of various colors, and by more or less complicated designs carried out in small pearl buttons, and beads. Even their leather shoes were more like the Lapp moccasin than our style of shoe.

What their color would be if they took a wash I cannot say but, although very sunburnt and wrinkled, many of them had blue eyes and blond hair. Some of the women wore heavy silver necklaces begrimed with dirt, on which were hung small silver coins and metal crosses.

No underclothes are worn, but their bodies are protected from chafing by a substantial layer of dirt. Such things as handkerchiefs are of course unknown, the nose being blown by the fingers, in the good old-fashioned way.

One of the men wore upon his thumb a large iron ring covered with sharp spikes at least half an inch long. These rings come in useful for fighting, which is their most popular pastime.

The interior of a Khevsur house looks like a junk pile: old saddles, bits of leather, filthy old sheepskins, empty beer jugs, baskets full of minor junk, old clothes and all mixed together with great slabs of sun-dried cowdung; such is Home, Sweet Home in Khevsuretia.

Beer is the national drink and each house had at least one great barrel of black liquid which I prayed no one would offer me. Beer is also used in their religious ritual, but the vats of sanctified beer may be touched only by the semi-pagan priests.

So far, we were the show for the Khevsurs. They were fascinated by the motion picture machine, especially with the telescopic view finder.

Directly across the valley and about half a mile away was another large village of Khevsurs. Seen with the naked eye, it was impossible to tell what the people were doing, but through the telescope they could be seen winnowing corn. Just for the fun of it, I allowed the headman to look at the other village through the telescope. At first, like most primitive people, he couldn't see anything, but suddenly he gave a shout and beckoned to several of his friends to take a look. What they saw evidently was the funniest thing they had ever seen, because they roared with laughter.

In the midst of the general excitement, Zetta woke up from her sleep and with a cry she dis-

covered that someone had stolen her diamond wrist watch while she slept. The Khevsurs were certainly not to blame, because they had not even seen her; but I am convinced that the thief was one of our police escort.

However, the loss of the watch didn't bother us so much; we were too excited at the prospect of securing a series of motion pictures which would be, so far as I could tell, the first and only ones ever taken of these interesting people.

First of all it was necessary to gain their confidence and for this we found our collection of Woolworth treasure invaluable. When I saw what it was they liked best, I could have kicked myself. Lipsticks were a mystery to them until Zetta showed them how to use one, and then they rubbed the paint on their cheeks.

Scissors made little impression. The pocket knives were not nearly so good as their own daggers. Cards of fancy buttons caused a mild flutter among the women. Safety razors were another mystery, and even safety pins were popular only with the children who liked opening and closing them. I was in despair until I noticed that they were watching me write in my notebook, with the greatest interest.

Pencils! I had a packet in my knapsack, but as there were far more people than pencils, I set to work and cut each pencil into four parts. Talk

about a scramble! The pencils might have been solid gold to judge from the eagerness with which they stretched out their hands for one. Only one or two understood or wanted to sharpen them, but most of the boys split open the pencil and removed the lead. They then retired to the house and started drawing on bits of wood or rock.

"How about asking them about their armor?" I suggested to Ivan.

"They will want money for that," he replied.

Handing him a ten-dollar bill I said:

"Offer them that if they will show us their armor."

"That will not be any use! You had better let me bargain with them in roubles and then you can pay me in American money," said the crafty Prince. But I'll hand it to Ivan for succeeding in putting on one of the most interesting shows I have ever seen.

After speaking to the headman for a few minutes, Ivan and a couple of Khevsurs entered the house and returned with their arms full of very black armor. None of it was rusty, but the steel shone through the black patine in places. There were helmets, long two-handed swords, coats of steel mail and several small round iron shields about fifteen inches in diameter.

Each shield had a large cross completely across it from one edge to the other. The helmets had nose



guards and were in an excellent state of preservation, and attached to one of them was the remains of what had once been a fringe of mail, that probably fell over the neck and ears. The coats of mail were badly tattered, but still quite usable.

After seeing and photographing these family heirlooms, I suggested that they put on their armor and let us take some movies of them having a sham fight.

This suggestion was greeted with roars of laughter, but they very good-naturedly complied with my request, all except the helmets, which nothing would induce them to don.

Each combatant held his sword in both hands, one guarded by a small round shield, and then at the signal from Snitch they fell to and gave quite an exciting exhibition of fencing with plenty of noise as the blades struck the shields.

Remembering the fabled beauty of Georgian women, I said to the headman, "Now I want to take some pictures of the most beautiful woman in the village!"

"She is my wife," he said with a smile, whereupon he pointed to a woman I had mistaken for a witch.

"How old is she?" I asked politely.

"Twenty-eight!" he replied. "And this is her baby," pointing to a small child with the dirtiest face imaginable, but very fine features.

As soon as he saw my attention drawn to him, the baby started to scream, so to pacify him I handed the mother a small five-cent looking-glass. One look was enough for him! His tears stopped immediately as he looked at himself from all angles and then looked behind the mirror.

One of the commonest questions that I am asked, whether I happen to be speaking about Malays, Africans, Lapps, or any other race of man is, "Are these people moral?"

Among the Khevsurs an unchaste woman was until recently, and perhaps still is, punished by having both ears and her nose cut off, yet their ideas of what constitutes chastity hardly coincide with our own.

We civilized people believe in the suppression of our natural instincts until marriage, or at least we are supposed to. After marriage, to judge from the records of the divorce courts, both men and women seem to claim the right to treat each other in the most unbelievable manner. With us, marriage is easy but divorce is difficult, and even after divorce the man is often handicapped for the rest of his life with the millstone of alimony around his neck.

With us, a girl is not supposed to know anything about the practical sexual side of married life until she gets married, which accounts for the old adage:

"Needles and pins, needles and pins; When a man marries, his trouble begins."

No Khevsur would dream of marrying a virgin and he couldn't if he wished, because all marriages are arranged by the parents, and no girl marries before she is twenty, and no Khevsur girl of twenty is ever a virgin.

Every Khevsur girl has the right, upon reaching womanhood, with the consent not only of her own parents but also of public opinion, to take a lover.

Such unions are subject to certain strict rules:

1. The girl can never marry her lover.
2. She may never have anything to do with her lover after she marries.
3. No children may result from this union with her lover.
4. Should she become pregnant by him, the girl is obliged to kill herself.

This strange custom has resulted in the Khevsurs being expert in the art of birth control.

To insure that a girl's real husband is the father of her children, it is regarded as a disgrace for a bride to have a child until she has been married four years.

Large families are frowned upon; and to insure that each child shall have its mother's entire care until it is weaned, Khevsur women have their babies at intervals of at least three years.

The result of these strange marriage customs is that wives know just as much about the art of loving as do their husbands, and they treat each other with a better mutual understanding.

After taking a whole series of pictures which are now included in my motion picture *Russia Today*, I gave the word to pack up and return to Passanaur.

By the time we had slid down the hill it was already getting dusk, and long before we reached home it was pitch dark. Never have I endured such misery! For the last five miles I rode standing in the stirrups, and from actual measurements made on the spot I found that I had lost almost one square foot of skin.

Just about midnight we arrived back at the inn, utterly worn out in several senses of the word, but with the satisfaction of knowing that we had seen and photographed a tribe of people who are as mysterious in origin as any people in the world.

Whether or not there is any truth in the Khevsur legend that they are descended from the Crusaders no one can say; but if they are not, then where did they get their supply of ancient armor and how did the legend originate?

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## Chapter Thirteen

### ARMENIAN HOSPITALITY

GETTING out of bed the next morning was a painful process and, as we had a long bumpy drive ahead of us, I turned myself over to my wife for repairs! By means of a handkerchief, a layer of cotton and a liberal amount of adhesive tape I was soon provided with an artificial seat! This was the second time in my life that I had been forced to wear a cushion in the seat of my pants to enable me to sit down without wounding myself!

The prospect of seeing Stalin's home town was exciting in itself, but it was even more thrilling to know that we should soon be in Asia.

Less than a month had passed since we were in Iceland!

The present position of Stalin as the ruler of Russia makes his early history all the more interesting.\*

\* For a complete history of Stalin, from which this short summary has been made, the reader is referred to the book by Essad-Bev entitled, *Stalin, The Career of a Fanatic*. Published by the Viking Press.

Although born in the ancient town of Gori, Georgia, the son of a cobbler, Joseph Djugashvili (alias Stalin) soon became a loafer and parasite in the gutters of Tiflis, where he learned the art of flinging a dagger ten yards and rarely missing his mark.

Having eventually conceived the idea that his wayward boy was more fitted for the ministry than the gutter, his father succeeded in entering him as a student in the Georgian Theological Seminary at Tiflis. His progress was so remarkable that he was expelled from the institution for socialistic heresy, but not before he had converted the seminary into a hotbed of atheistic anarchists.

He then organized the first Caucasian Workers' Strike and very soon became an accomplished street-corner agitator.

When Tiflis became too hot for him he removed himself to Batum where he quickly became the leader of the Social Democratic Labor Party, spending most of his time organizing strikes among the workers of Batum's great factories. His arrest quickly followed, and by being sentenced to prison Stalin graduated as a thoroughbred revolutionary. It was during his imprisonment that Stalin first read one of the pamphlets of Lenin, which had been smuggled into the prison. So eagerly did he eat up the contents of this pamphlet that the Caucasian authorities decided to banish the trouble-

some young man to Siberia, but it wasn't very long before he escaped; and in January, 1904, Stalin reappeared on the streets of Tiflis as a disciple of Lenin and quickly became the leader of the local Bolsheviks.

Henceforth his career was that of most other famous revolutionaries except that Stalin was also a terrorist and thought nothing of holding up a bank and bombing it afterward for good measure. In other words, to secure money for the Party, Stalin became a political gangster. If bomb throwing, imprisonment and banishment, over and over again, are considered an essential part of the education of a good Communist, then no man could be better qualified to become the leader of the Communist Party and the Ruler of Russia.

Unfortunately it is impossible to get Russians to discuss Stalin in Russia. Over and over again I tried to start a conversation about him with Olga and Ivan, but both immediately shut up like a clam, refusing either to praise or to criticize him.

We had been told that Stalin's mother still lived in Tiflis, but no matter how innocent and natural our questions were about her, our Intourist guides professed the most profound ignorance of the whole subject of Stalin and Company. Henceforth, therefore, I tried to banish from my mind all thoughts

of Communism and devoted myself entirely to the task of finding what was left of Noah's Ark!

I will admit that when I left America, hoping to climb Mount Ararat, the chance of finding a part of the Ark was extremely remote. But on arriving at the famous city of Mtzkhet, soon after leaving Passanaur, I suddenly discovered that the Flood and Noah's Ark are very real things in that part of the world and that there was a strong possibility of finding at least a portion of the most famous ship in the world.

Founded by one of Noah's great-great-great-grandsons, Mtzkhet was once the capital of the Georgian kingdom and the seat of their Patriarch, but today it is a quaint little village dwelling in the shadow of two noble old churches and a large ruined castle. In olden days, Mtzkhet was one of the most important fortified cities in the Caucasus. From very early times the site of the city has been inhabited, as is shown by the numerous cave dwellings hewn out of the soft limestone rock of the cliffs along the River Kur. It was not far from here that Pompey, in his famous march to the Caucasus, defeated the Iberian armies.

Ivan must have been somewhat of an intellectual prince in former days; to my astonishment he pointed to a very ancient bridge and said: "The foundations of the bridge were built by Pompey!"



Out came my camera at once, but no sooner had I pointed it in the direction of Pompey's Bridge than Olga rushed up excitedly: "You mustn't photograph that; it is a military bridge!"

If she had ever heard of Pompey, Olga probably thought he was a local Red Army general, otherwise she would never have made such a fuss about taking a picture of a dilapidated but still useful bridge that must have been built before the days of Christ.

She didn't raise any objection, however, to my taking pictures of the old churches and castle in Mtskheta, although the chauffeur and the evil-looking "mata gelap" protested loudly at our wasting their time instead of hurrying on to Tiflis.

After scrambling up some ancient stone steps we found ourselves in the courtyard of the old church, but on finding the church locked we looked about us and soon found a door leading to what may have been a monastery. Knocking at the door, we were greeted by a very old man dressed in a long black cassock. He had a snow-white beard that reached almost to his waist, and his name was Bishop Alexis.

Calling to Ivan for his assistance as interpreter, I inquired: "We are looking for Noah's Ark. Can you give us any news of it?"

Without the slightest sign of surprise the old

man replied: "You have come to the wrong place! I am the custodian of the coat of Jesus!"

"Where do you keep it?" I asked politely.

"In the church," he answered, "but I can only show you the shrine." Taking an enormous old key from his belt, the Bishop opened the door of the ancient Cathedral Church of the Twelve Apostles, in which are buried many of the old Georgian kings.

The interior of the church certainly looked ancient; in fact, I had seen nothing in my whole life before that looked so genuinely old.

Pointing to a peculiar looking monument with a top like a pyramid, the old man remarked: "The most holy coat of the Lord Jesus was brought to this town soon after the crucifixion and is kept there."

In the nineteenth chapter of St. John, verses 23 and 24, it is written:

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be."

The legend of this relic that is supposed to be in the cathedral at Mtzkhet is unusually interesting:

It is claimed that a certain Jew from Mtzkhet was

actually present at the crucifixion, and that he purchased the coat from the soldier who won the lottery, intending to bring it home, not as anything of religious value or interest but merely as a present for his sister Sidonia. Immediately Sidonia put on the coat, she fell down dead and was buried in the garment.

In later years, the place of Sidonia's interment having been revealed in a dream, the body was exhumed and found to have all the appearances of life, even exhaling delicious perfumes! Ever since then the coat has been preserved in the church as a holy relic.

In connection with this story of the Coat of Jesus, an extraordinary coincidence happened to me:

Not being a Biblical scholar, I had no idea where to find the account of this casting of lots for Christ's raiment, except that I knew it did occur somewhere in the New Testament. I had completely forgotten that the word "Coat" had been used, so before writing this chapter of my book, in order to find out exactly what Jesus wore at his crucifixion, I consulted the Bible.

I was not relishing the idea of wading through the whole New Testament, and to me it looked like hunting for a needle in a haystack to try to check one particular word, but when I opened the Bible I found that my thumb was pointing to a word written in italics.

It was the word "coat"! The discovery gave me an uncanny feeling as if some unseen power were anxious that I should find a backing for the legend of the Coat of Jesus.

Having been shown all over the church by the Bishop, I again asked him if he had any idea where I might find the remains of Noah's Ark.

"The most likely place," he replied, "is in the monastery of Echmiazin which is in Armenia, close to the base of Mount Ararat."

At last I was on the right trail!

When I asked Ivan if he had ever heard of the monastery of Echmiazin he said with a scornful laugh:

"Why, that is Noah's home town, as you Americans say! Those crazy Armenians say that Noah founded their town after the Flood subsided."

Ahead of me were, therefore, two famous home towns, the one of Stalin and the other of Noah!

We arrived in Tiflis at five o'clock in the afternoon and found that the capital of Transcaucasia was typical of the country.

Tiflis is a city of contrasts and mixtures, a melting pot for all kinds of Europeans and Asiatics and about the last place I would choose for a summer holiday. It is a gateway to Persia and the East, so that strings of camels are quite commonly seen in the city.

Rooms had been reserved for us at the Hôtel

de l'Europe which proved to be the nearest approach to a good hotel we had hitherto found in Russia. We were given two enormous rooms and an extra dining room in which we stored our baggage and prepared our own meals when those in the main dining room proved uneatable. The hotel was crowded and a fairly good little string orchestra played for dinner and dancing.

Tiflis was even gay, the people in the streets were better dressed than in Moscow, and unless you looked for it, the squalor of Northern Russia was not so evident. Churches were open and people were evidently not afraid of their lives to enter them.

Even the shop windows had modest displays of goods for sale and the people in the streets seemed happier. You could even catch an occasional smile. As for the droshkies, although they were still quite beyond our means, they were far better looking and in better repair than any we saw in Moscow.

Stalin has either been kind to his home town or he is afraid of his fellow Georgians, but there is no doubt at all that the Soviet Government has so far been inclined to leave Georgia and Armenia to do pretty much as they like, and that's exactly what Georgians and Armenians like to do.

Paper roubles, however, are just as useless for all practical purposes to foreigners as they are in other

parts of the U.S.S.R., as I soon found out when I paid three roubles for a shoeshine!

Within a few yards of the main entrance to the hotel was a large glass-fronted noticeboard on which were displayed the usual maps of the United States and the British Empire, exposing both as the greatest enemies of the Workers of the World. Before the Revolution, Tiflis had the reputation of being a Russian Paris and even today it still shows signs of Parisian liveliness.

For reasons best known to themselves, the Intourist authorities did everything they could to persuade us to remain in Tiflis and cut out the rest of our contemplated trip to Mount Ararat. First of all, there was no car available; then it was reported that the road from Tiflis to Erivan was impassable; then we were told that Erivan was undergoing reconstruction under the Five-Year Plan and that the city streets were not open to automobiles because a system of street-car lines was being laid.

"But in any case," said the Intourist manager, "you will have to return to Tiflis because I have been instructed from Moscow that your tour is to end here!"

That was our first intimation that something had gone wrong with the works, and that the Russians might exercise their power and refuse to allow us to continue our journey into Turkey.

Demanding to be shown our passports which were in the custody of Intourist, I showed the manager the Turkish visas permitting us to enter Turkey via Erivan and Igdir.

"But I do not find any Russian Exit visa," he remarked with a cunning smile. "This Turkish visa means nothing to the Soviet Government. Unless they issue a permit in Moscow for you to enter Turkey, then you will have to leave Russia the way you came in!"

Until now it had never dawned upon me that a traveler in Russia was not free to leave the country when and where he wished, provided he left at a legitimate place. My disgust was no greater than would be the disgust of a Japanese entering the United States at New York and expecting to leave at San Francisco, but on arriving at San Francisco being informed that he must return to New York and go home to Japan via Europe and the Suez Canal.

Not a word had been said about my not being allowed to enter Turkey without a special exit visa; on the contrary, the Intourist manager in Moscow had himself arranged for me to secure the necessary Turkish visa for exit at Igdir which is in sight of Mount Ararat.

There was no use kicking against the pricks, however, so after announcing that I was going to Erivan

even if I had to hike, we were given a wretched old motor car that broke down repeatedly long before we reached Erivan. That we were not all killed is a miracle, since the steering gear went wrong while we were careering wildly down a steep grade with hairpin turns every hundred yards and a precipice at every bend.

So long as it was daylight the frequent blow-outs did not matter so much, there being an endless series of strange sights to see. Caravans of camels, long trains of quaint-looking wagons with quainter-looking people on board, herds of sheep, Persians, Turks, Tatars, Georgians, Armenians passed by continually.

About five o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at the town of Delijan which was once a fashionable summer resort for the wealthier residents of Erivan. The country surrounding Delijan is still beautiful, but the town has become a dump. The houses are dilapidated and the streets are filled with ragged people and burly soldiers from the large military encampment on the outskirts of the town.

We were informed that the U.S.S.R. had just concluded a pact of friendship with Turkey, so just to show that there was no ill feeling a powerful Red Army was then engaged in maneuvers close to the Turkish border. The air was filled with the rattle of machine gun fire and an occasional thunder



of artillery. The soldiers themselves, like all those in the Russian Army, were well fed and well equipped with brand-new uniforms, top boots and bright yellow leather cartridge belts.

Most of the people were Armenians, many of whom had doubtless been saved from famine or death at the hands of the Turks, by money subscribed in America to the Near East Relief. I myself had seen the magnificent and humane work of the Near East Relief in other parts of the Near East during the year 1928 and we, like most of our countrymen, had contributed to the relief of the starving Armenians. It was rather a disappointment, therefore, to put it mildly, to discover how some of the Armenians showed their gratitude to Americans.

In many instances, as we passed through their villages, they shouted insulting words at us, and encouraged by their Communist elders, children showered the car with stones. At first we thought the insults and brickbats were intended for our Russian companions, but when our car broke down in the main street of Delijan, a grown-up woman dipped up some muck from the sewer that ran alongside the street and deliberately flung it over us.

Although far less under the heel of Moscow than other parts of the Soviet Union, it appeared that Armenians were good Communists!

Anti-American propaganda was to be seen every-

where we went, and if ever there was an instance of "biting the hand that feeds," Armenia is one. Yet it should not be concluded that all Armenians are Communists and anti-American by any means, any more than all Russians, because we met with far more kindness and hospitality in Armenia than anywhere else in the Soviet Union.

Out of a population of about a hundred and sixty millions, there are less than two million Communists in the whole U.S.S.R. By Communists, of course, I mean members of the Communist Party, and I have no doubt that the same percentage applies to Armenia.

We left Delijan stinking with Delijan hospitality, and after an hour's drive into the mountains the engine went dead. This turned out to be a piece of good luck: while the chauffeur was tinkering with the car, we discovered from the driver of a passing bullock cart that we were sixty miles off our course and going in the opposite direction from Erivan.

Where we would have landed had the engine kept going I have no idea, but on discovering the accidental or intentional losing of his way by the chauffeur, we ordered him back to Delijan and thenceforth we did our own guiding.

An interesting thing happened while the car was *kapoot*. Noticing a scraggy-looking apple tree with

a few small apples on it, Zetta suggested that being in a Communist country we might as well help ourselves to some fruit. "Certainly!" agreed Ivan as he led the way some distance up the road to an old gate. The car was out of sight in a bend of the road and suddenly Ivan's whole manner changed.

Opening the gate for Zetta he stood to one side, bowed and said in a most courteous way, "After you, madame."

"You behave like a gentleman!" remarked Zetta.

"I am," answered Ivan, "but I daren't show it before the others."

For the next five minutes this Georgian prince waited upon Zetta in a manner worthy of a courtier and begged us to understand that it was only a matter of vital necessity that forced him to behave like a cad when in the presence of his Communist confrères.

It was now quite dark and, much against the wishes of Ivan and Olga, we insisted on continuing the journey over the right road to Erivan. Had we remained overnight in Delijan, I doubt very much if we should ever have reached the slopes of Ararat, because we eventually discovered that Moscow never intended us to go beyond Tiflis.

From Delijan to Erivan the road is one of the most spectacular bits of engineering in the world.

Mile after mile the car labored and groaned as we climbed to the pass, 7,124 feet above sea level.

After the terrific heat of Tiflis, the cold was intense and when we were not chilled to the bone by the icy wind we were chilled with fear at the absolutely reckless driving of the chauffeur who was mad and sulky because we had refused to spend the night in dirty Delijan. Nothing we could say or do would persuade him to slow down. He made sixty miles an hour skirting precipices every few minutes.

As we began the descent towards the Plain of Araxes, "The Valley of Flowers," we saw before us, stretching away for forty or fifty miles towards the south, the great lake of Goktcha (a corruption of the Tatar name, which means Blue Lake). This enormous freshwater lake is six thousand feet above sea level and, according to the local legends, was left by the Flood after the waters receded. According to Marco Polo, there are no fish in the lake until the first day of Lent when suddenly they appear in enormous numbers and remain until Easter Day for the special benefit of the faithful! But the age of miracles has evidently passed because the fish remain in the lake all the year round. They are a species of salmon trout and provide an ample supply for a huge fish factory that has operated there for many years.

On an island in the lake, not far from the shore along which the road is constructed, is the famous Armenian Monastery of Sevan.

Lake Goktcha is surrounded by extinct volcanoes, apparently entirely devoid of trees, with patches of snow lying in the valleys, and the whole district is covered with lava.

Just as dawn was breaking, we saw ahead of us, rising abruptly from the plain to a height of seventeen thousand feet, the most famous mountain in the world, Ararat. The only other mountain I have ever seen that at all resembles Ararat is Mount Hood in Oregon. Both are snow-capped extinct volcanoes, not connected with any other range of mountains, and both are distinct cones. The mountain was about sixty miles away but looked much nearer.

From where we were, the town of Erivan seemed to be nestling at the very base of Ararat, but actually there is a great plain between them; and while Erivan is in Armenia, Ararat is in Turkey, much to the disgust of all Armenians who from time immemorial have regarded this mountain as their own private property.

Kemal Pasha is said to have formally complained to Stalin because Mount Ararat, although belonging to Turkey, has been placed on Armenian postage stamps. Stalin is said to have told Kemal that, if Turkey has the right to place the moon on her

stamps, Armenia has just as much right to place Mount Ararat on hers!

By four o'clock in the morning, having reached the outskirts of Erivan, our engine stopped with a loud report; the chauffeur, having opened the hood, turned to us and said, "*Kapoot!*"

From the look of the engine, that was smoking as if it were red-hot, I diagnosed the trouble as melted bearings and a few broken connecting rods, but who cared? The town was close at hand, so Olga and Ivan started out on foot and after two hours returned with a decrepit droshky and an old bus into which we three Americans piled with all our precious baggage leaving the others to salvage the car at their convenience. As we drove away, I saw Olga and Ivan climb into the smoking car and curl up to sleep until Erivan came to life.

Our conveyances had to stop five blocks from the hotel, because for once Intourist had certainly told us the truth: in accordance with the Five-Year Plan, Erivan's ancient streets were being torn up and all traffic was at a standstill. There was nothing to do but unload the bus and carry every bit of baggage five blocks. The pieces that were too heavy to carry we dragged noisily along the concrete sidewalk, probably to the great annoyance of the sleeping population.

Flinging ourselves on to the old iron bedsteads

without undressing, we slept until eight o'clock when we were awakened by the heat, the hum of countless flies and a series of screams and groans from the adjoining bedroom. Fearing that someone was being murdered practically under our noses, I opened our window and walked on to the iron veranda to investigate. Just as I did so, a tired-looking woman stepped out and, seeing that I could not understand what she said to me, she let me look into her room.

There, tied down by means of several large bath towels that passed over his waist and under the bed, was an elderly man. He looked as if he might die at any moment, so emaciated were his features and hands, but his eyes were wide open and he was evidently in a state of terror, pointing at the ceiling, alternately screaming at the top of his voice and moaning pitifully.

How long he had been confined to that bedroom I could not ascertain, but from the look of the room, which was fitted up for housekeeping, he must have been there a long time. We were never able to find out what ailed him, but for the three days that we were in Erivan we had to listen to his perpetual ravings, the hotel being filled to capacity.

Hot, and still stinking of Delijan, we made for the hotel bathroom—but no luck! The bathroom was there all right and so was the name on the

door, but evidently in Erivan a bathroom is a place for storing baths, because there were four ancient iron baths, one inside the other, piled like coffins against the wall. All were covered with the dust of ages, awaiting the time when, under some future Five-Year Plan, a plumber is assigned to fit them up.



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## *Chapter Fourteen*

### MOUNT ARARAT AND NOAH'S HOME TOWN

THE PLAIN at the base of Mount Ararat is locally regarded as the site of the Garden of Eden, which may account for the fact that watermelons, peaches and apricots were quite abundant, for which we were eternally thankful. We lived on fruit most of the time.

At nine o'clock we received a caller. He was a strange-looking individual, dressed in checked trousers and a Russian blouse. The trousers were evidently homemade, perhaps by his wife, because they had all the earmarks of an amateur tailor. His head was shaved, he wore pince-nez and carried a yellow walking stick. On his feet he wore an old pair of low canvas shoes.

In spite of his odd appearance, he was spotlessly clean and gave the impression of being a bankrupt "Piccadilly Johnny with a little glass eye." There

are some men who, no matter how unfortunately dressed, are every inch gentlemen. I do not necessarily mean gentlemen by birth; I mean gentlemen in the best sense of the word.

One glance at this man showed me that he would not behave like so many Russians did and scratch his head with a fork at the dining table; I knew that he would not belch at meals, not suck his teeth, nor spit on the carpet. I knew that he was a man of gentle manners, polite to women, respectful where respect was due; that he would wipe his shoes before entering a living room, and not remove his shoes in the drawing room. Let me call him "Oasis," for he was certainly that to us.

Hat in hand and with a courteous bow to Zetta, he addressed us: "Est-ce que vous parlez français, monsieur?"

Could I speak French?

"Un peu," I replied in my best Parisian accent.

My pronunciation of "peu" must have misled him, because he immediately plunged into a long conversation which was completely beyond me. "Excusez moi," I said in my obvious schoolroom French. "Il faut que vous parlez lentement, monsieur."

Quickly grasping the situation, Oasis spoke very slowly, word by word, and I gathered that he was an assistant to the Intourist manager in Erivan, and he had come to place himself at our disposal.

"The first thing I want to do is to see the man who has the power to fix up our passports," I said. "We want to cross the border into Turkey."

Out we went into the blazing sun, and after a long walk we arrived at the office of the local representative of the Kremlin.

"He is a very important man!" whispered Oasis, as he ushered me into the room; then he quickly added the word "Juif!"

Sitting at a desk was a well-fed man of about thirty, who looked up, beckoned me to a seat and went on with his writing. By his side was a stack of telegrams that instinct told me concerned my expedition to Ararat.

Again forgetting the advice I had received in Moscow, I addressed him with all the graciousness and politeness at my command. He accepted my outstretched hand with a queer look that told me that politeness wasn't going to be of any avail in this instance.

Before I had a chance to explain my errand, the "juif" commenced sarcastically: "How is it that the eminent representative of the Geographic Society of Chicago is unaware that Mount Ararat is in Turkey and not in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics?"

Keeping my temper, I explained that I was well aware that Ararat was in Turkey and that my pur-

pose in paying him a visit was to inquire whether Moscow had granted me an exit visa into Turkey.

He asked to see our passports, and having examined them, he said: "I have received information from Moscow that you purchased a tour that ended in Tiflis! How is it that you are here in Erivan?"

I produced a bundle of Intourist literature which I had obtained from the New York office, in which it clearly stated that a tour could be extended for any length of time at the regular rate of ten dollars per day per person. He waved the papers aside and said abruptly: "You must return to Moscow and take it up with them!"

Then I blew up! But the only concession he would make was to consent to send a telegram "lightning" (the fastest way in Russia) at my expense asking permission to grant me the exit visa I required.

The interview was over, and knowing by experience that Russian lightning is anything but greased, I decided to go ahead with my plans to find Echmi-azin; if no answer to the telegram came within three days, I would kiss my hand to Ararat and waste no more money on swelling the coffers of Intourist.

As I left the office, observing that I was slightly annoyed, Oasis remarked: "It is a pity! but I am afraid you were very unwise to bring the Pole with you!" referring to Snitch.

"Snitch is no more Polish than you are," I

snapped. "He is an English-born naturalized American and wouldn't recognize a Pole if he saw one."

"His name! It is unfortunate!" replied Oasis.

Then with a smile he continued: "We have heard about your expedition to Mount Ararat, but I am afraid you will not receive permission to cross the border!"

"What would happen if we walked across the border to Ararat and then came straight back?" inquired Zetta. "Would we be stopped?"

"You would be shot by the sentries!" he answered.

"How about going to this place called Echmiazin?" I inquired.

Oasis brightened up at the prospect of being able to do something for us.

"Echmiazin!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "That is very easy. We can drive there in an hour easily. You will find it one of the most interesting places in Armenia."

Off he dashed, twirling his walking stick, to make arrangements for another motor car. Within an hour we were flying along a very bumpy road that led straight out into the plain in the direction of the Turkish border. On our left was Ararat, with Little Ararat close beside the main mountain.

Very soon we caught up with a large flock of fat-tailed sheep, in charge of a shepherd riding on a tiny donkey. So small was the donkey and so

big was the shepherd that his feet kept on touching the ground as the donkey broke into a trot.

Here was Noah with a whole string of animals, riding along within sight of Ararat, and driving his flock to Echmiazin, which was actually Noah's home town.

It took us quite a long time to get past that flock of sheep whose rear ends, wobbling from side to side in a most comical manner, made me think of Broadway.

"Those sheep need girdles!" remarked Snitch with a laugh.

"They'll soon need go-carts," I exclaimed.

"Go-carts? I don't understand!" joined in Zetta.

I then had to explain that this particular breed of sheep develop tails of enormous size. A sheep is often as thin as a rail in other parts of its body because most of its food is absorbed by the tail, with the result that in the tail season its tail often weighs as much as fifty pounds and drags on the ground and develops a sore. With a thoughtfulness unusual among Asiatics, the shepherd often makes a small cart, fitted with a couple of wheels, and attaches it to the rear end of the sheep so that the animal can go about his business dragging his tail behind him—in a go-cart!

I have been accused so often, by people who travel about with their eyes shut and by people

who haven't traveled at all, of willful misstatement of fact that I will depart from my usual habit of not spoiling a good story by some dry scientific explanation, and will refer any doubters to Lydekker's *Natural History*, volume 2, page 227, where they can read about these very amusing animals. While I am in the mood for referring people to books, I would recommend to anyone interested in Mount Ararat to read about this historic mountain in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, under the name "ARARAT," from which I have selected the following:

There is poetical fitness in the legend that Ararat was the resting place of Noah's Ark, inasmuch as this mountain is about equally distant from the Black Sea and the Caspian, from the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Round Mount Ararat gather many traditions connected with the Deluge.

The Garden of Eden is placed in the valley of the Araxes; Marland is the burial place of Noah's wife; at Arghuri, a village near the great chasm (in the side of the mountain), was the spot where Noah planted the first vineyard, and here were shown Noah's Vine and the Monastery of St. James, until village and monastery were overwhelmed by a fall of rock, ice and snow, shaken down by an earthquake in 1840.

Poetical fitness or not, in this part of the world there is no question at all about the attitude of the local people towards the Flood. They speak of it

as a great catastrophe, and they are still bemoaning the loss of Noah's ancient vine which was so recently destroyed.

The popular belief that all the human beings on earth were drowned by the Flood, except Noah, is not held at all in the Caucasus and Armenia.

The ancient Greek historian and Philosopher of Damascus, Nicolaus Damascenus, wrote:

In Armenia, above Minyas, there is a great mountain upon which it is said that *many* who escaped at the time of the Flood were saved, and that *one* who was carried in an ark came ashore on the top of it, and that the remains of the wood were preserved for a long while.

I have had many talks with Armenians who can speak English and have discussed their legends with them, and they all stated that when the Flood occurred large numbers of people saved themselves by fleeing to the Caucasus, where they climbed to the tops of the highest mountains, several of which are considerably higher than Mount Ararat.

One of the most interesting legends about Ararat concerns Christians especially. It is said that there was once a stone pillar on the mountain with the figure of a star upon it. This pillar was connected with the worship of the stars by the Chaldeans. Before the birth of Christ, twelve wise men stationed themselves at the pillar to watch for the appearance



of the star in the east. Three of them followed the star to Bethlehem!

Just before we reached Echmiazin, our attention was drawn to a group of ancient ruins not far from the roadside. We stopped the car and spent a while examining them. They appeared to be the ruins of a temple, and I bitterly regretted my scanty knowledge of archeology. Among the remains of fallen columns and broken cornices I found a large flat stone, cracked across the center. It was the shape and size of an old-fashioned tombstone, perhaps three feet wide and five feet high, with rounded top and about four inches thick. The whole stone was covered with cuneiform inscriptions.

Oasis remarked when he saw it: "Who knows? This may be Noah's calling card!"

It was much too heavy to bring away, but I certainly would have liked to know the story that stone had to tell.

Not far from these ruins we saw the towers of Echmiazin Cathedral Church and Monastery, and within a few minutes we were driving along the main street of Noah's home town.

Echmiazin claims to have the oldest monastery in the world, whose monks have spent their lives from time immemorial trying to climb Mount Ararat in search of Noah's Ark. For many centuries, Echmiazin has been the seat of the Ka-

tholikos, or Armenian Patriarch, who is the spiritual head of all true Armenians, whether they live in Armenia or in Chicago's Loop. The curse of the flaming sword of the angel who drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden seems to have clung to this part of the world ever since.

Armenia, and especially the Plain of Araxes, has been overrun and devastated by Saracens, Persians, Mongols and Turks. The Armenians themselves have always been hated and loathed by the Turks who would dearly like to wipe them from the face of the earth but, like the Jewish people, Armenians seem to thrive on persecution. Today, as one of the republics of the U.S.S.R., Armenia is probably better off than she ever has been, but her inhabitants have no more idea of what Stalin has done to the Ukraine than have the great majority of Americans. The Caucasus Mountains are an even greater barrier between Russia and Armenia than is the Atlantic between Russia and the United States.

The ruinous state of Noah's home town is not due to Communism or to Russia, but to her extreme age and the "laissez faire" of the people. Life goes on in Echmiazin very much as it did a thousand years ago, except that the number of monks in the monastery has dropped to a mere handful of twenty old men with long beards, whose numbers are not likely to be increased.

Ever since the year 302 A.D., when the first Christian church in Armenia was founded here by St. Gregory the Illuminator, on the very spot where Christ descended on a ray of light from heaven, Echmiazin has been the ecclesiastical metropolis of the Armenian nation.

The name Echmiazin means, "The Only-Begotten descended."

The Armenian church is entirely independent of Rome, and except that they do not believe in his infallibility, Armenians regard their Katholikos just as Roman Catholics regard the Pope.

The church is surrounded by an ancient wall over a mile long, and within the walls are also the monastery, library and other monastic buildings.

The library contains many priceless manuscripts, some of which have never been translated or published. On the library wall is a magnificent oil painting showing Noah descending with his family from Ararat, followed by a long line of animals!

Outside the wall is all the filth, smells and poverty found in most ancient Oriental villages, and when we passed through the old gateway in the wall it was like passing from hell into heaven. All was peace and quiet in the lovely old garden and orchard that surrounded the church itself. Black-robed monks strolled about tending the garden while in one corner, seated under a large tree, was a monk teaching a class of small children.

For such an offense in Russia proper he would have been shot, but as I have said before, so far Russia has dealt lightly with the republics south of the Caucasus.

My heart thumped with excitement as we knocked at the door of the monastery. The door was answered by a monk who was considerably younger than those we had seen in the garden, to judge from his long bushy black beard.

"These people are visitors from America," said Oasis. "They are very anxious to see the interior of the church."

The monk closed the door, and in a few moments came back, accompanied by a huge man in a black cassock. He must have been well over six feet, straight as a pillar, gray hair and gray beard, a man who seemed to radiate personal magnetism. His face beamed with pleasure as he spoke to us, picking his words very carefully and enunciating them slowly and distinctly: "You are welcome. You must please excuse my English because I have not spoken your language for many many years."

"Please do not mistake us for tourists," I begged. "We have come all the way from Chicago on purpose to visit Echmiazin. We are looking for Noah's Ark or what is left of it!" I continued with a smile.

The old man's eyes twinkled. "We have the remains of the Ark here in the church!"

If he thought we were crazy, he didn't show it when we all three actually jumped with joy and excitement.

"May we see it?" we all said eagerly.

"That I cannot say, until I have consulted the brothers," he answered. "I must explain to you, that it is the most prized possession of the monastery. Do not misunderstand me; we do not class it as merely a relic. We have many relics; we even have the iron spear which was thrust into the side of Jesus at his crucifixion; we have the nails and a piece of the Cross, but," he continued with a merry twinkle in his eye, "there are many such relics in other churches. This piece of Noah's Ark is in quite a different category, and no other church in the world possesses or even claims to possess such a thing."

It occurred to me that it was about time we had some mutual introductions, so we unpacked our Explorers Club and Adventurers Club flags and showed them to him, together with my letter from the Geographic Society of Chicago.

Pointing to the Explorers Club flag, he said, to my astonishment: "This is a new flag! I know your club very well, and this is not like your old flag!"

He then introduced himself to us.

"I am Archbishop Mesrop. Our Katholikos has

recently died and until his successor is elected, I am in charge of Echmiazin!"

He then invited us into his study, and for the next hour we completely forgot that we were in the U.S.S.R. Archbishop Mesrop was obviously a great scholar and author. His bookshelves were lined with valuable books including many on exploration.

"We are all explorers here!" he laughed as he explained to us that the monks of this monastery prided themselves on being mountaineers.

"My last expedition was in nineteen-thirteen — nearly twenty years ago! I was a young man then, only fifty-five!"

"Fifty-five!" I exclaimed in astonishment, because no one would have dreamt that this splendid specimen of a man was on the road to being eighty!

"Yes," he said, "I climbed Ararat on August twentieth, nineteen-thirteen, with a Swiss guide and party of forty men, but only thirteen of us reached the top!"

"Any signs of the Ark?" I asked, smiling.

"Too much snow and ice," he answered. "If there are any remains, they must be buried under it."

The Archbishop then told us that, although he himself would have no objection to our seeing and photographing the portion of the Ark which had been in the church for centuries, it had never been shown to a layman.

He promised that he would call a meeting of the monks that evening and see what could be done about it.

That we were eventually successful in being allowed, not only to see, but to handle and photograph it was probably due to my wife's clever salesmanship. After giving the Archbishop a detailed account of the anti-religious campaign in Russia, especially the blasphemous exhibits in the cathedral at Leningrad, she said to the horrified Archbishop:

"As for your piece of Noah's Ark, if the Bolsheviks ever got hold of it, they will either destroy it altogether or they will place it in a glass case and make fun of it. Here is an opportunity of having at least photographs of it in the Explorers Club and Museums of America where such things are treated with respect. It will not be long before this lovely old church is turned into an anti-religious museum, at the rate they're going in Moscow!"

"The Soviet Government has been very good to us," said the Archbishop, "and I pray that such a thing as you fear will never come to pass!"

The next day we again motored from Erivan to Echmiazin, bringing with us all our motion picture equipment.

The monastery garden was deserted and the church doors were locked but from within the

building came the sound of Gregorian chanting, mixed with the swishing of brooms.

Much to our embarrassment, while we were listening through the enormous keyhole, Archbishop Mesrop suddenly came up behind us. With a genial smile he greeted us.

"Good news!" he said. "They have decided to show you through the treasury and allow you to take whatever pictures you wish." Then he added: "The church must always be cleaned thoroughly before the portion of the Ark is touched, and certain ritual must be gone through. That is what you hear, and the reason they are sweeping the floor."

For at least an hour we waited, and then suddenly the door was unlocked and a monk, putting out his head, shouted something to the Archbishop.

"Get your cameras ready! They are coming!" said the Archbishop.

Slowly and reverently the monks filed out of the church and stood in a line outside, followed by two very old men. Each man was carrying in his arms a heavy golden casket covered with precious stones that glittered and sparkled in the bright sunlight, a sure sign that they were genuine.

Snitch was cranking his camera for dear life, but the monks seemed not to notice him.

"You may open the caskets," said the Archbishop, addressing me.



I had some trouble at first with the old-fashioned clasp, but on opening the first I saw a large iron spearhead.

It was about ten inches long, shaped like an elongated diamond, and had been mended by means of a strip of iron and some old rivets.

"This is the holy spear with which the side of Jesus was pierced by the Roman soldier," explained the Archbishop. "It was brought here by the Apostle Thaddeus."

After taking a good length of motion pictures of the spear, I opened the last casket, which looked very much like an ordinary ikon from the outside, but on opening the two doors of the casket, instead of finding the usual painting of Jesus or the Holy Family, there was a piece of reddish-colored petrified wood, measuring about twelve inches by nine and about an inch thick.

"You may examine it as much as you like," said the Archbishop. "This is the portion of Noah's Ark which was brought down from Ararat by one of our monks named Jacob, St. Jacob."

It was obviously petrified wood, as the grain was clearly visible, but having expected to see a piece of wood that was curved like the side of a boat, I remarked that I was surprised to find it was flat.

Archbishop Mesrop had a sense of humor. He

instantly remarked, "You have forgotten the rudder, Mr. Wells!"

So this was the piece of wood I had come so far to see, and the thing that so many other travelers, including Lord Bryce, had been unsuccessful in seeing.

We then entered the church and were shown through every nook and cranny of the ancient building which had been built over the spot where Jesus had stood after his ascension into heaven. The actual spot is now marked by a tabernacle constructed over the central altar exactly underneath the dome.

Here also was a marble slab covering the hole through which St. Gregory drove all the devils that infested Armenia in his day.

Long before the erection of the cathedral, on the same spot, had once stood a statue of the goddess Anaitis, to whose service many of Armenia's noblest families dedicated their daughters, and where the girls acted as prostitutes for a long time before they were given in marriage. Nobody had the slightest scruples in those days about marrying one of these girls after her period of service to the goddess was over.

On the altar, covered with black crêpe, were the vestments of the Katholikos who had recently died.

But the glory of Echmiazin Cathedral is the Treasury, which we next entered.

At last we could understand how simple it must have been for Stalin to fill the museum in the Kremlin with priceless treasures, because in this one church alone there are still treasures of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls and gorgeous antique vestments that must be worth thousands.

Beautifully arranged and still in use, their great value impressed one far more than the piles of similar treasures that are shown to people in the Kremlin, the atmosphere of a museum being entirely absent. Of all the treasures, the most highly valued intrinsically is an enormous urn made of silver and gold. The urn is about three feet high and almost as wide. Every seven years this urn is filled with oil, which is then blessed by the Katholikos and distributed in small vials to all the Armenian churches in the world, where it is used, I believe, for anointment.

The Blessing of the Oil every seven years attracts thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world and is a considerable source of revenue to the convent and the village.

Having taken a series of pictures inside the church, we retired to the Archbishop's study, with two other monks, where he gave us delicious muscatel wine, small cakes, and excellent coffee.

It was now the Archbishop's turn to question us about the outside world. He was absolutely starving

for news and told us that for many years he had not been able to secure a copy of a foreign newspaper.

"Is there anything I can do to repay you for your great kindness?" I asked. He had absolutely refused to accept any money for the church and we felt under a great obligation to him for the first real hospitality we had received at the hands of anyone connected with the U.S.S.R.

"Yes!" he replied. "My typewriter is *kapoot* and you can do me a very great favor if you will send me a spare part for it. My hands are too shaky to write, and I am terribly handicapped since I use this typewriter for correspondence in several languages, and it has been broken for two years!"

It wasn't his fault that the machine was *kapoot*, but ever since the Revolution, such things as typewriters, especially spare parts, have been absolutely unprocurable by ordinary citizens.

He then produced a Hammond Multiplex Typewriter Number 208293 which has characters for typing in several languages. The small metal guide that carries the ribbon had worn through from constant use, and without it the machine was useless.

On my return to America, I purchased two of the spare parts and two sets of new ribbons, made them up carefully in separate boxes and mailed them by registered mail to Echmiazin. Both packages

were eventually returned to me marked "Forbidden."

If by any chance there is someone who has the necessary political influence to have these spare parts sent to an Archbishop nearly eighty years of age, who needs them badly, I wish that person would get in touch with me, and even if he is the reddest of the PINKS, I shall be eternally grateful to him for enabling me to show this old man that his kindness to an American traveler has not been forgotten.

Since permission to leave the U.S.S.R. via Turkey, and attempt to climb Mount Ararat, had been refused, my job was finished. I had found the remains of Noah's Ark and secured some excellent motion pictures, but the next job was to get them out of Russia.

We had just said good-bye to the Archbishop when a young fellow in the costume of an aviator approached. Having heard we wished to reach Mount Ararat, he told us that he was willing to fly us to the mountain and back!

Forgetting for the moment what might be the consequences of even flying over the border without permission, I inquired how much the trip would cost.

"Three hundred roubles an hour, and I can make it in a couple of hours," he replied.

"Three hundred roubles!" I exclaimed. "Why, we can get a sightseeing ride in America for three dollars an hour!"

Shrugging his shoulders, the aviator remarked: "C'est la même chose! Trois cent roubles, trois dollars!"

Evidently roubles were of less value in Armenia than in Moscow, and I was almost tempted to accept his offer to take me for a joy ride around Ararat, even though three hundred roubles meant one hundred fifty dollars to me and only three to the Russian, but on thinking the matter over, I decided that a secret flight across the border might result in the confiscation of all my films and would give the Soviet authorities a legitimate excuse to arrest me. I gave up the idea and returned to Erivan.

The memory of our train journey from Moscow to Vladikavkaz traveling "Soft" was still too vivid for us to risk a "soft" journey back again, so that it was with unchangeable determination to travel back "International" that we entered the Intourist office and requested the best possible accommodations.

From the demeanor of the manager towards us, it was quite evident that we were "persona non grata." Gone was his obsequious manner, its place being taken by surly rudeness quite unusual in an Armenian. In Moscow and Leningrad we had be-

come accustomed to the manners of the proletariat and had found that the best way to act was to behave like an animal also.

Here in Erivan, Russian boorishness had given way to Armenian craftiness and lying.

After being assured that we would travel back to Moscow in fine International cars with a dining car attached and promising to send a supply of good food for our use in any emergency, we found that not only was there no diner nor any emergency food supply, but the "fine International Sleeping Cars" were *kapoot* and just as thickly inhabited with "visitors" as the "Soft" class.

Our total food supply the first day on the train was one large sunflower blossom for three people. Hour after hour we sat like chickens pecking at the black seeds. I will not bore my readers with a description of that horrible journey that lasted five days.

I shall always regret that I did not take a photograph of our party when we eventually reached Moscow at four o'clock in the morning of August 6, 1932, because we at last looked like a trio of ordinary Russian travelers. Having gone four days and nights without any water for washing purposes and still wearing the original clothing that we had donned nearly a month before, dirty, ragged and stinking, we no longer attracted any attention.

All we thought about was getting out of Russia as quickly as possible. The sight of the Kremlin no longer thrilled us, the crowds of starving people around the railway station did not interest us; compared with the plight of the thousands we had seen in the North Caucasus, these Moscow beggars looked like aristocrats!

I could have kissed the conductor when he gave the signal for the train to leave Moscow and start for Leningrad.

The moment we arrived in Leningrad the next morning, I advised Zetta to go straight to the Intourist office and pick up our reservations on the train for Finland, while Snitch and I took charge of the baggage and our precious motion picture film. So happy did I feel at the prospect of getting out of this cesspool of a country that when I arrived at the Intourist office I was in the mood to forgive anything and even try to forget.

The moment I entered the office I realized that something was wrong: there was a great commotion going on at the far end of the room.



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## *Chapter Fifteen*

### GETTING OUT OF RUSSIA TRAILED BY THE G. P. U.

I'D TAKE a ticket to hell to get out of this God-forsaken dump! Yes, I said dump, and if I knew any worse word I'd use it!" Those are the exact words that were being shouted at the top of her voice by a pretty American girl who was standing at the counter surrounded by a crowd of tourists. She was dressed in a very old skirt and blouse, dirty but neat. On her feet she wore a pair of low-heeled Oxford shoes, her hat was greasy and covered with dust and she looked almost as down and out as the average Russian girls we had seen — except that she had clean underclothes. I knew this because she happened to be my wife!

Having just finished a month in the land of the Great Experiment, she had learned by bitter experience that it doesn't pay to be polite in Soviet Russia and that the best way to get attention is to

use plenty of bad language, especially blasphemy; they love it.

The man to whom she was speaking was the manager of the Intourist bureau. He wore the usual Russian shirt with the tail hanging out and his head was shaved.

"But, madam, there are no seats on the train to Finland for two weeks and it is quite impossible to secure accommodations before then!" he explained.

"Ye gods! . . . Do you expect me to pay you ten dollars a day for the next two weeks hanging around in this lousy Leningrad?"

By this time a large crowd of newly arrived American and English tourists, innocent lambs for slaughter, were casting horrified looks in her direction. It was quite obvious that they were very much ashamed of this terrible exhibition of temper on the part of a fellow American traveler, but just then the manager of Intourist said to me admiringly, "What a woman! what a woman! I think I can arrange matters."

He then called someone on the telephone, and after a short conversation he turned to my wife and said with a smile: "I can let you have two seats in the Finnish Diplomatic Car! The train will leave this afternoon!"

Sure enough at about five o'clock that same afternoon we found at the railway station a reserved car-

riage and awaiting our arrival was a young Russian girl carrying a brief case. She greeted us with a smile.

"Mr. and Mrs. Carveth Wells?" she inquired.

"What's left of us!" I replied, but she didn't appreciate my weak attempt at humor. The smile so rarely seen in Russia left her face as she handed us our passports.

We were so relieved at seeing those precious passports once more, that I said "God bless you!" I really meant it, but the effect on the young Communist girl was as if I'd thrown a handful of muck over her. She actually shook her dress and with a loud "Bah!" turned on her heel and left us.

This Leningrad railway station is probably very much like those other stations in Russia which are close to the border, and I have no doubt that the same scene is enacted every time a train starts out of Russia laden with people who have permission to leave this dreadful country. The best way to understand the attitude of the passengers is to imagine that this was a train carrying a load of souls from hell into heaven.

Everyone seemed to be on his best behavior and terrified lest at the last moment there would be some hitch that would prevent his leaving. Conversations were guarded. I noticed an Englishwoman enter the train with a little boy. She was

nicely dressed, but as both she and the child looked terribly ill, I approached her and offered to get her a bottle of drinking water. She looked at me and whispered: "For God's sake don't let them see you speaking to me. My husband is still in Leningrad. Wait until we get across the border!"

The train was alive with Red soldiers and members of the secret police. They patrolled the corridors and kept peeping into the carriages and counting the passengers. Every time I saw one approach I thought he was looking for me! You could see the same fear written on every face. I kept on saying to myself, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip" and "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," but at last, nearly an hour late, the train started for the border of Finland, and we entered our compartment.

What a blessed change from the filthy Russian trains we had traveled in for the last month. Gone was the vile smell of ancient urine and the peculiar odor of innumerable bedbugs. All the fittings were highly polished, there was clean water in the glass carafe and, Heaven be praised, there was a new roll of toilet paper in the toilet, the first I had seen since the one I had smuggled into Russia a month before. A few minutes after the train started, a genial fat woman attendant, spotlessly dressed, brought us clean pillows and asked if we were comfortable, but

when I started talking to her and praising this Finnish train, she placed her finger to her lips and nodded toward the group of Russian police who were standing in the corridor. I had forgotten that we were still in Russia!

Then suddenly I remembered my Russian diary in which I had said some uncomplimentary things about Stalin, and that Al Capone would be merely a playboy for the present ruler of Russia! To say such things about a high Soviet official, especially Stalin, is a criminal offense in Russia and is punishable by death.

The next hour seemed like twenty-four as the train slowly made its way toward the international boundary between Russia and Finland. I had eighteen pieces of baggage, and for the life of me I couldn't remember where I had placed that diary; I had thrown everything I had into those boxes in my haste to catch this train. Would the customs open them? What should I do if they found my Russian diary? Would there be a letter at the border ordering our arrest and return to Leningrad? These and a hundred other questions filled my mind until suddenly the train stopped with a jerk.

I looked out the window and saw a fairly large shed, in which were numerous officials with revolvers strapped to their belts. The engine had stopped at a barbed-wire fence and all the passen-

gers were alighting and carrying their baggage to the shed for examination. I seemed to be the only person with anything larger than a suitcase, and long before I had carried my eighteen pieces of baggage to the shed the other passengers had been examined and most of them were back in the train.

About six officials then held a consultation about me and my impedimenta. One man in particular was waving a piece of paper and pointing to my name on the list. I saw there was a mark against my name. More argument! The engine began to blow its whistle impatiently as those officials ransacked every box and bundle I possessed. It was evident that they were looking for something. Then it flashed through my mind that of course the Russian interpreter who had accompanied us from Leningrad to Mount Ararat must have told them about my diary! Soon there was a large pile of photographs, books, newspapers, cameras, specimens of minerals I had picked up, and the remains of the varied assortment of Woolworth's treasures I had taken into Russia to give away, such as safety pins, fancy buttons, scissors, lipsticks, and small mirrors. The examination then ceased and one of the inspectors fetched the head man!

"Have you any letters?" he asked me. "No!"

"Have you any roubles?" "No!"

"Where is your photographer?"

So they *did* know who I was. I explained that my photographer with all his films had been detained in Leningrad and that I was not taking any motion picture film out of the country. He then confiscated all the old newspapers, books and minerals, leaving me to repack my eighteen bits of baggage and carry them back to the train.

Where was that diary? Just at that moment my wife came up to me and I could see the top of the diary showing at the V of her blouse. I nervously said, "Aren't you feeling cold, dear?" She took the hint, heaved a sigh and the diary disappeared.

Then with a shrill toot on its whistle, the train started slowly and in a short time it began to cross the border. But it did not steam merrily into Finland. Inch by inch, more slowly than I thought it possible for a train to move, did that engine creep out of Russia. The boundary is formed by a small river about fifty feet wide and spanned by a small iron bridge. The Russian half of the bridge was painted bright red; the Finnish half was painted white. At one end of the bridge flew the red flag, at the other the blue and white colors of Finland.

As the train crossed the bridge, the Red soldiers and secret police jumped off exactly at the middle of the bridge, turned on their heels and walked off at the Russian end.

Then an amusing thing happened, which must

have been arranged by the Finnish engine driver. The moment the end of the train reached the middle of the bridge and crossed the red line, it stopped with a jerk. Everyone climbed out of the carriages, and without any rehearsal at all, the passengers gave three cheers and at the same time placed their thumbs to their noses, pointing them at the Red soldiers who were slouching angrily away. I then discovered that this performance was the regular thing. They haven't heard of a Bronx cheer in Russia, but such was the spirit of the passengers on our train.

And now another wonderful surprise was in store for us, and I think purposely arranged by the Finnish Government. Within a hundred yards of the border was a first-class restaurant and refreshment room, surrounded by lovely green lawns and gardens of bright flowers. If you have ever seen a herd of pigs being fed, you know how they guzzle and fill their stomachs in a wild race lest any one pig should get more to eat than any other.

Then imagine how the passengers on this train raced into that restaurant. I myself had actually lost twenty-six pounds in weight living on sunflower seeds and cucumbers. I hadn't seen an orange, or a banana, or tasted milk or butter or white bread for a month, but here before me was the most amazing assortment of good things I had ever seen.



Everyone who has traveled in Sweden knows what an elaborate smorgasbrod is like, but the display of appetizing food in this Finnish restaurant was even better. Not only was every kind of food to be had, but all kinds of American candy and cigarettes. There were mountains of golden butter, huge jugs of milk, steaming urns of coffee and tea, an assortment of fresh fruit that did justice to the most elaborate Italian fruit market. There were dainty little cakes and jars of English jams; in fact, now that I look back I can see that this restaurant in Finland, within sight of Russia, must have been purposely stocked with all the luxuries that are denied to Russians.

It was obvious that we were all starving. I know that I was, and I found myself with my arms full of food that I couldn't possibly eat. We helped ourselves, ate as much as we wanted and then told the waitress what we had eaten and she gave us a check for less than we had paid for one rotten tomato across the border! Propaganda perhaps, but the most welcome propaganda I have ever encountered. Eventually we returned to the train and for the first time in a month we slept alone.

The attendant told us that every train that comes out of Russia has to be thoroughly fumigated as it is usually impossible for people who are leaving Russia to leave all their company behind them.

The last thing I can remember about Russia was seeing a little ragged boy on the Red side of the river that divides Russia from Finland, trying to recover a piece of orange peel that was floating in the water.

Only people who have experienced in Russia the filth, the stench, the fetid atmosphere, the lousy beds, the complete absence of any decent food, and the reek of the crowds of starving beggars, can appreciate our joy on arriving in Helsingfors and finding a city that is spotlessly clean, with splendid new public buildings, excellent department stores and one of the most comfortable hotels in Europe, the Hotel Torní. We had no money and we looked like a couple of Bolsheviks, but evidently this was not an unusual predicament for travelers arriving from Russia—the taximan paid the railroad porter and the hotel porter paid the taximan.

Within a few minutes we had registered and been shown to a delightful bedroom with a most elaborate bathroom fitted with all those extra devices that are found only in the bathrooms of northern Europe. Except for the one bath in Vladikavkaz, the only baths we had had for the past month had been in a small enamel basin which I have always carried with me on my expeditions. I would first secure a kettle of boiling water at some railway station and bring it into our compartment. Part of the

water we'd place in a thermos flask for drinking, but the rest would go into the basin. Then my wife would take a sponge bath while I and my camera man guarded the door. Then I'd take a bath in the same water, and finally our patient camera man would take his in the residue!

When we reached this charming hotel we soaked and scrubbed for a solid hour, and then we decided to order a real American breakfast of grapefruit, bacon and eggs and French fried potatoes, buttered toast and coffee. It had never occurred to me that I couldn't speak a word of Finnish. To our delight we found that it was quite unnecessary to speak any language in the Hotel Torni; our room was fitted with a regular switchboard of electric bells, each distinctly marked in a language that anyone could understand — a picture!

The object of each bell was denoted by means of a clever cartoon. The bell for the waiter had a cartoon of a waiter carrying a tray! The porter's bell showed two porters carrying a load of baggage! The bell for the maid had a nice little picture of a maid in cap and apron carrying a dust-pan and brush.

Finland is right next door to Soviet Russia and consequently she has taken every precaution to prevent the spread of Communism across her borders, with the result that there is no trace of it. When

Finland discovers a Bolshevik agitator within her boundaries, be he Russian, German, English or American, he is taken to the border of the U.S.S.R., given a kick and thrown bodily into the Communist Paradise. Finland permits no Hyde Park or Union Square agitators to spread their loathsome propaganda. Living next door has enabled her to appreciate the danger of Russia — she can smell the aroma of the Communist, which unfortunately seems to lose its pungency after crossing the Atlantic, otherwise America would follow Finland's example and deport all Communists to the country of their origin.

Our digestion impaired by rotten food and our nerves shaken by the ghastly things we had seen, we decided to go to Paris and forget Russia in a whirlwind of gaiety, but Paris was as dead as mutton, owing to the general depression.

Fed up with Paris, we decided to fly to London, and within a few hours we had registered at the Savoy Hotel.

Scarcely had we settled down when the telephone rang.

It was the Russian Embassy calling!

Seventeen days had elapsed since we crossed the Russian border and entered Finland, and during that time we had traveled in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Germany and France, yet within

thirty minutes of arriving in London, the Soviet Embassy knew of our arrival.

"Mr. Carveth Wells is requested to call at the Soviet Embassy!"

Such was the message that gave me quite a thrill as it showed without any doubt that the G. P. U. had kept their eyes on us everywhere we went.

At eleven o'clock on Saturday, August 27th, I called at number 13 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, which was the residence of the Ambassador, but I was careful to take with me my wife and my sister.

"The Ambassador is away, but the Chargé d'Affaires is anxious to see you," said a rather pretty English girl who answered the door.

We were immediately shown into a large room, where, sitting at a desk, was a very ordinary-looking person who spoke English perfectly.

"I understand that you have a complaint to make about your treatment in Russia, Mr. Wells," he began; "but I must protest against your broadcasting your complaints before you have given us an opportunity of investigating the matter."

He then requested me to tell him what had happened. For the next half hour I told him exactly what I thought about Russia, Communists, and especially Intourist.

At the mention of Intourist, he looked quite pained!

"Now I understand what is the matter," he said. "It is evident that you have received very bad treatment from this company, but understand this—" and he banged the table when he said it—"Intourist is not connected with the Soviet Government any more than Thomas Cook is connected with the British Government; your proper course in order to liquidate this trouble is litigation!"

I was so surprised at his complete disavowal of any connection between Intourist and his Government that I left the room vowing to start litigation against them as he himself had suggested. However, by the time I reached America and had a thorough investigation made by my attorney he advised me that, regardless of the overwhelming strength of my case, financially it was not worth while.

For fifteen years I have been a public lecturer in the United States, always speaking on travel and exploration, and during the whole of that time I do not believe I have made a really dangerous enemy! It is true that I have poked fun at certain kinds of explorers and so-called big game hunters; but I have done so without malice and because there were certain aspects about exploration and faked animal pictures that badly needed debunking.

When I went to Russia, I was seeking a new travel

lecture and I certainly succeeded in finding one, but ever since I began lecturing on Russia I have acquired a host of bitter enemies, especially the Friends of the Soviet Union who are determined to destroy me if they can.

In spite of the fact that the Soviet authorities developed my motion pictures, censored them severely and returned the residue to me as harmless, the moment I was ready to distribute my talking picture *Russia Today* there was—and still is—an organized attempt on the part of these Friends of the Soviet Union to have this picture banned from the American theater. Not content with writing protests, these good American friends of Communism have filled their letters with atrocious lies about a picture they have never seen, and the distributor, Mr. Sol Lesser, has been threatened with a boycott of all his pictures if he dares to distribute *Russia Today*.

At my public lectures I have had to seek the protection of the police because I dare to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth to my audiences, instead of showing a lot of propaganda handouts depicting the huge success of the Five-Year Plan and how carefully Russia takes care of her babies!

Russia is a big country; she has big ideas and always has had.

She made the largest bell in the world, but it

won't ring — it's *kapoot*. She made the largest cannon in the world, but it won't shoot — it's *kapoot*. And last summer she had the largest collectivized farm in the world with three thousand cows, and no bulls — so that was *kapoot*!

If America decides to give the "forgotten man" a new deal by turning to Communism, then I suppose I shall end my days in jail or before the firing squad, but until America does become one of the United States of Socialist Soviet Republics, I shall continue to tell exactly what I saw in *Russia Today*, and in my humble way debunk Communism, and a country whose avowed object is the overthrow of the existing form of government in the United States.





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## APPENDIX

**I**N ORDER that this book shall be as up to date as possible I have received permission from "The New York Times" to reproduce two articles which appeared in the "Times" dated July 30th 1933.

The first article is from the special correspondent in Moscow to "The London Times" and thence to "The New York Times." The second article is from Mr. Walter Duranty in a special cable to "The New York Times."

If these articles are read in conjunction with this book, I believe that my readers will agree that the title "KAPOOT" was justified.

C. W.

*Special Correspondence, THE NEW YORK TIMES.*

LONDON, July 11.—The London Times prints the following dispatch from a special correspondent in Moscow:

The march of events in Soviet Russia has not merely proved stronger than the application of theories, but the two combined have reduced Russia economically to a vestige of its former self in the days of the Czars. In view of Soviet propaganda on the subject this may seem at first sight an astonishing statement.

The visitor to Russia via Warsaw enters the Soviet Union in all the luxury of a broad-gauge pre-war Wagons-Lits car. Here everything is bourgeois and prepared for the guest whom the Soviet delights to honor, or for the tourist, who, if he will only pay, is treated as a member of a race apart. His first minor shock comes when he visits the restaurant car and discovers there is no butter, no milk, no lemons—in fact, very little of anything. However, he has a tiny omelette, some black bread, and some tea with sugar, and he pays 5.50 rubles.

#### FOREIGN CURRENCY NEEDED

Although outside Russia rubles can be purchased at six a shilling or less, the carefully regulated official price is nearer six to the pound. No one is allowed to take rubles in or bring them out of the U.S.S.R. The visitor soon finds he is lucky to be able to obtain even such meals at the price, and he can console himself with the assertion which he will hear officially ad nauseam that the Russian people are making sacrifices for the Five-Year Plan and that foreign currency is badly needed in order to pay for it. The tragic truth concealed behind these prosaic statements will be borne in on him the longer he stays and the more he discovers for himself Soviet Russia of today.

To analyze the lot of the urban Soviet citizen in terms

of what he can buy is a strangely complicated process, for the position of the ruble in the structure of the Soviet system is extremely changeable and elusive. The Soviet State is certainly not equalitarian or Communist. There is no communism left in Russia. Ostensibly the system adopted is based on payment by results, but, in fact, status plays a more important part. The purchasing power of the ruble is different from each of the many categories into which the population is divided, and even then changes in varying circumstances.

A party member has full ration cards, housing facilities, and purchasing power for his ruble in excess of all other categories, and the priest or other members of the "remnants of the classes to be destroyed" are denied the primary necessities of food, shelter, and even of life itself. In any case, first category ration cards or not, you have little to look forward to if you belong to the proletariat and not to the dictatorship.

The Bolsheviks claim (to several points of decimals) that last year their factory output was three times that of pre-war Russia, but the universal lack of goods for consumption at once suggests that there is something which needs elucidation about this figure if the terrible poverty of the people is to be explained. The explanation is simple. In pre-war days 85 to 90 per cent of the total production of goods for consumption was produced by the peasants by hand in their homes and in small workshops. In pursuit of the policy of concentrating all production collectively under State trusts, this peasant and small-workshop production has virtually disappeared, and Soviet Russia today is left with an output on this basis of from 55 to 70 per cent less than in pre-war days.

The accumulations from the past have long since been

consumed in previous crises or merely destroyed. An ordinary Soviet worker earns from 50 to 300 rubles a month, the majority about 125 rubles and for this, if he can obtain class privileges, he is lucky to have a purchasing power, including food, rent, clothing, and household requisites, and leaving out the question of inferior quality, of not much more than what 10 shillings a week would buy in this country.

### FOOD PRICES ARE UP

If he happens to be a member of a particularly favorite or well-managed "coöperative" or Soviet he may do a little better. He will certainly in a city like Moscow only share a part of a room, but if he is unfortunate enough to have been drafted to a new city, such as Magnitogorsk, or a labor or timber camp, Moscow will seem like heaven in comparison. As goods get scarcer prices continue to rise, and they are now twenty or twenty-five times what they were before the initiation of the Five-Year Plan.

The Five-Year Plan has seriously undermined the financial structure of the Soviet Union. It is almost impossible to verify the published figures, but two things are clear. The capital works erected in Russia are not producing anything like a return to meet the cost of financing them, while their capital value is depreciating at a fantastic rate. The seriousness of the financial position is still largely masked as a result of the past success of the Soviet Government in obtaining long-term credits for what it buys abroad and securing cash, or short terms, for what it sells.

On its foreign trade a deficit has been accumulating for some years. Last year its export showed a decline

of 30 per cent on the previous year, and at the end of the year its commitments abroad on account of the Five-Year Plan were 1,250,000,000 gold rubles, or between £160,000,000 and £170,000,000, of which about £100,000,000 matures for payment this year, the larger part in Germany.

They talk much of a "planned national economy." Their planning is a byword and a joke of a grim character. Last year, of their total national investment 13 per cent only was appropriated to the production of goods for consumption, the whole of the balance being devoted to the production of capital goods. Enormous blast-furnaces, dams, hydro-power stations, tractor and motor works have been erected. For their construction foreign brains and foreign machinery are essential, since the Soviet lack the experience, the skill and the management necessary, and this has been a very expensive business, throwing an immense charge on to agriculture, which has to supply food and produce for export at whatever cost to the peasants, for rubles will not buy the necessary foreign currency.

The Five-Year Plan has proceeded qualitatively — *i.e.*, according to principle — and apparently without any reference to the quantitative factor. The so-called "planned national economy" is out of balance and largely abortive. Take, for instance, their largest, and from some points of view their most successful, installation of this nature, the hydro-power station Dnieprostroy. Erected by American engineers at a stated cost of 250,000,000 gold rubles, or more than £30,000,000, it was a wonderful technical achievement, but it was planned according to a general theory and without planning as to the needs it must serve.

To be economic this plant should feed factories and other concerns of a capital approximately ten times that of the power station. In fact, Dnieprostroy has practically nothing to feed. As a result, of six turbines only one is working, and that much under capacity. The whole plant is hopelessly uneconomic — a white elephant eating its head off.

### EFFICIENCY STANDARD LOW

Moreover, in spite of highly differentiated wage piece rates on which the previous Communist system now bases its labor economy, Soviet workmen are not more efficient than the fanatical party men who lay down the policy, and the rate of machinery depreciation is necessarily fantastic. All over the union one gets the same story. The standard of efficiency is incredible to any one with the smallest knowledge of what is required for economic machine production. Inefficiency is the outstanding feature of Soviet industrial life, and collectivism is paralyzing production.

These monuments to Bolshevist inefficiency and lack of planning have caused a virtual cessation of the production of goods for consumption of which the population is in dire and pressing need. But the problem they create is paltry compared with the tragic position that has arisen in agriculture as a result of its attempted collectivization. During the last four years a revolution has taken place which has had disastrous results.

The Kremlin claims that last year 20 per cent more may be true. What is also true is that in spite of good land was cultivated than before the revolution. This average harvest conditions the food they have obtained has been enormously less. Everywhere, from fields,

factories and industrial plants, masses of workers, goaded to desperation by hunger and poverty, form roving hordes seeking some unknown place which may yield the primary needs of life.

During the last two years 70,000,000 peasants have been driven from 14,000,000 holdings on to 200,000 collective farms. Those who have proved themselves successful farmers are hunted down, exiled to labor and timber camps in the north, massacred, and destroyed, and in their place young, politically inflated party members seek to "plan" the new agriculture.

#### MACHINERY NOW USELESS

Sowing operations take two or three times longer than they did before. In many districts 90 per cent of the new machinery imported from abroad now is so much scrap. A complicated harvester machine loses a bolt and there is no one to make the necessary adjustment. Where it is now necessary to revert to horse implements neither horses nor implements exist.

The introduction of the passport, intended, apart from its use for political terror, to keep workers in fields and factories at their work, can only succeed by brute force aided by the ruthless use of hunger as a weapon. There is a food deficiency unique in Russian history, and terrible are its consequences. The exiles and shootings, sometimes of whole villages or collectives, cannot produce seed corn which has been consumed. The peasants are starving and desperate, but they can do little else than die. The efforts of the Bolsheviki to solve their problem merely create unemployment on an increasing scale. Owing to the destruction of the machinery of distribution, and to the inertia of their system of central-



ized bureaucratic trusts, a large quantity of the food which is sent to cities such as Moscow perishes before it arrives.

The whole Soviet system is the biggest economic jam in history, and the strictness of the Soviet censorship cannot for long hide the truth. The cage of economic impossibilities which they have erected around themselves is now ruthlessly narrowing in on them to their own discomfiture. Apart from foreign war, which its economic chaos and weakness could not sustain, or open strife among the leaders in the Kremlin, the dictatorship is formidably stable, and millions may yet have to suffer before the bankruptcy of the system is exposed.

By WALTER DURANTY

*Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES*

Moscow, July 29.—The most puzzling thing to all foreigners who visit Russia is money.

What is the difference between the so-called *torgsin*, or "gold" rubles, and ordinary rubles, and what is either really worth.

For the foreign visitor nowadays it is comparatively simple. He books his Russian trip through an Intourist office abroad on terms that cover all expenses and pays it in the money of the country where he books the trip or in dollars.

If he wants to buy souvenirs he gets them at a *torgsin* store in exchange for his foreign currency. But he is puzzled when he tries to buy a meal where his Intourist tickets are not taken, and where he finds the charge seventy rubles, \$45, at the official exchange. And he is still more puzzled when a waiter says \$4 will do.

The explanation is that in addition to official exchange there is a "bootleg" rate, which represents the real purchasing power of the Soviet paper ruble [Torgsin rubles have been held consistently to gold parity, with correspondingly high purchasing power], which runs from twenty-five to forty to the dollar. Once the visitor understands this, he imagines he has a clear picture.

### PEOPLE LIVE FAIRLY WELL

But that is not the half of it, because the average wage in Moscow certainly is not above 125 rubles a month, yet the population manages to live fairly well.

Herein comes a new factor of infinite variability—the quality and quantity of food and goods supplied by the "closed" restaurant and the coöperative attached to the large factory offices or other enterprises in Moscow.

If the restaurant and coöperative are efficiently managed, the worker's 125 rubles monthly salary may not be far short of its gold parity in value—\$85 today because rent, transportation and theatres and other amusements do not exceed 25 rubles a month. Social insurance, medical and dental treatment, medicines and education are free. There remain his meals at the factory restaurant and the food, clothing and household goods he buys of the coöperative.

If the restaurant is good, the worker gets an adequate three-course meal for less than a ruble. If the coöperative is good, he can satisfy his other needs for fifty rubles more, because both restaurant and coöperative prices are fixed so low as to give almost gold value.

It is otherwise, however, if the restaurant or coöperative is ill managed. The prices are equally low on

paper, but either the quality is lower or the goods simply are not available. This forces some workers to buy what they need at "open" stores or from the market, where prices are ten to fifteen times higher, or to do without.

### DISCREPANCIES ARE GREAT

It thus happens that a man who has access to a "closed" store and a salary of 100 rubles may be getting a higher real wage than a comrade in a similar factory with a poor store whose salary is 300 or 400 rubles.

A similar anomaly occurs as to the collective farms, which now include three-fifths of the peasant population, or nearly 50,000,000 people. The collectivized peasants are paid after harvest according to their "labor days" throughout the year.

Payments are made in kind, and calculated by the amount of the surplus in the hands of the collective after meeting its obligations to the State and to tractor stations, which amount to from 15 to 20 per cent of the total crop.

If the crop is good, each labor day may be reckoned as high as ten kilograms. In some cases this year it reached seventeen. On an average labor-day total per collectivist of two hundred days each individual thus gets two tons, which was once beyond the dreams of any save the rich kulak.

The newspaper Pravda actually cited the case of a shock brigade peasant in the Crimea who received for the year's work of himself and three other adult members of his family sixteen tons of wheat and 4.6 tons of barley.

Against that, where a collective is ill managed, the

labor day payment diminishes, but that, say the Bolsheviks, is as it should be, as it gives a great stimulus to the masses to improve the management.

# SOME INTERESTING BOOKS ON RUSSIA AND THE U.S.S.R.\*

TRANSCAUCASIA AND ARARAT	
By <i>Lord Bryce</i>	Macmillan
THIRTY-FIVE YEARS IN RUSSIA	
By <i>George Hume</i>	Simpkin
STALIN, THE CAREER OF A FANATIC	
By <i>Essad-Bey</i>	Viking Press
NEW RUSSIA'S PRIMER	
By <i>Ilin</i>	Houghton Mifflin
GOLDEN DAYS OF SOVIET RUSSIA	
By <i>Noe</i>	Rockwell
HUMANITY UPROOTED	
By <i>Hindus</i>	Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith
BRITISH AGENT	
By <i>Lockhart</i>	Putnam
THE RUSSIAN CRUCIFIXION	
By <i>Mackenzie</i>	Jarrols
THE COMMUNIST SHAKES HIS FIST	
By <i>Bruce Reynolds</i>	Sully
THE BLACK SEA, CAUCASUS AND CASPIAN	
By <i>Sir A. Cunyngnam</i>	John Murray
THE TERROR IN EUROPE	
By <i>Tiltman</i>	Jarrols
FEBRUARY 1917	
By <i>Tarasov-Rodionov</i>	Covici-Friede
WITH THE RUSSIAN PILGRIMS TO JERUSALEM	
By <i>Stephen Graham</i>	Macmillan
LEAVES FROM A RUSSIAN DIARY	
By <i>Sorokin</i>	Hurst & Blackett

\*I have included books written both before and after the Revolution. Some are political, others straight travel and exploration. Some are in favor, others against, the present régime, but all are extremely interesting.

EYES ON RUSSIA

By *Margaret Bourke White* Simon & Schuster

THE TRAGEDY OF RUSSIA

By *Will Durant* Simon & Schuster

RUSSIA

*Encyclopædia Britannica*

DING GOES TO RUSSIA

By *Darling* Whittlesley House

RED SMOKE

By *Issac Don Levine* McBride

RED VIRTUE

By *Ella Winter* Harcourt, Brace













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